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CRITICISM

a quarterly for literature and the arts

ARTICLES BY

MARTIN KALLICH ON THREE WAYS OF LOOKING
AT A HORSE: SWIFT'S "VOYAGE TO THE
HOUYHNHNMS"

JEFFREY HART ON THE IDEOLOGUE AS ARTIST:
SOME NOTES ON *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS*

RICHARD J. DIRCKS ON GULLIVER'S TRAGIC RA-
TIONALISM

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ALBERT COOK ON REFLEXIVE ATTITUDES: STERNE,
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WOLFGANG STECHOW ON WINTER LANDSCAPE IN
THE HISTORY OF ART

J. A. WARD ON SOCIAL DISINTEGRATION IN *THE
WINGS OF THE DOVE*

*Reviews by Harry T. Moore, Otto Kinkeldey, Henri Peyre,
Richard Harter Fogle, and Edward E. Bostetter*

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*Three Ways of Looking at a Horse:
Jonathan Swift's "Voyage to
the Houyhnhnms" Again*

After the passage of years, conditions and ideologies change so much that one generation can scarcely understand another. If this is true of supposedly unambiguous statements of belief, the difficulty of understanding irony from one age to another must be doubly increased. Moreover, as in the case of a work like Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, when irony enters an area of religious tabu and becomes indiscreet or wicked, outraged orthodox or simpleminded contemporaries can detect only irreverence and possible heresy. Thus, despite the author's intent, ambiguities can be converted into crudely simple statements of belief—their original meanings so distorted that the satirist is charged with maintaining opinions directly the opposite of what he in reality professes.

Yet much irony, no matter how obscure its indirection may be, is a matter of relatively simple dialectical tension on a single plane. Dramatic irony, however, adds another level, making for complications that are trebly ambiguous, often too difficult and obscure to unravel. It adds to the problem of verbal irony that of character, action, and situational interpretation. Lastly, there is a fourth complication in the reading of dramatic irony—one produced by all imaginative literature in varying degrees. Because by its very nature it demands empathy, such irony militates against objectivity, detachment, and fixed meanings, so that interpretations, no matter how apparently analytical and scholarly, can vary in accordance with time, place, and person.

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All these generalizations bear upon a reading of Swift's "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" in *Gulliver's Travels*. Thus, when read in our own day, in addition to the triple complication of the dramatic irony based upon a created character Lemuel Gulliver, the interpretation of this part of the travels will be complicated by what the presentday reader thinks he sees in the book no less than by what he thinks the fictional character or the author Swift wants him to see. For the moment, let us turn from the vision of Gulliver and Swift and attempt to view the horses in the light of the generally accepted ideals and values of contemporary western civilization. Such analysis, frankly unhistorical, will provide perspective for the heart of this essay.

According to the values of western culture, Yahoo society of Houyhnhnmland is anarchist and excessively individualist—its chaos and disorganization contrasted with Houyhnhnm stability and order. The Yahoos practice equality, which is modified by rude force; the Houyhnhnms, on the other hand, peacefully accept subordination and due degree. Yahoo culture is nonexistent, but that of the horses is only a little more advanced, crudely simple in comparison with ours today. The horse culture is undynamic, and economically and technically backward, with neither learning nor letters, neither machinery nor money. Thus, as a result of their agrarian society in which knowledge is traditional, the horses have evolved a tranquil way of life that is in effective contrast with the violence of that of the bestial Yahoos. But, at the same time, when compared with human beings, the horses are also dull and unimaginative and stupid (consider their stupidity concerning Gulliver's clothes), regimented, caste-ridden, collectivist—if not outright primitive communist. Nothing of any great moment happens in a land governed wholly by tradition; therefore, the Houyhnhnms have little or no history. The fatal flaws of horse culture from the contemporary point of view are, in short, its absence of certain fundamental values and ideals, such as progress, freedom, independence, political equality, and an individualism somewhat tempered by social consciousness—all dynamic values nourished by an active fluid democracy and complex industrial society, but all that Swift in his own day or his imaginative creation Gulliver did not particularly relish.

As beings, moreover, the Yahoos of Houyhnhnmland represent all that is perversely disagreeable, doomed because of innate compulsions to be eternally dissatisfied and restless, even though they do have the virtue of being vigorous, competitive, and aggressive. The horses

represent superficially agreeable, temperate, and placid creatures; but they lack depth and strong will power. It is true that they have some feeling that passes for affection and brother-love (they are practicing pacifists); yet they certainly are incapable of passion. Perhaps passion as such may be considered evil, but from the modern point of view it is too close to sexual love to be entirely purged away. Swift himself had to concede this point in his "Thoughts on Religion": "Although reason were intended by Providence to govern our passions, yet it seems that, in two points of the greatest moment to the being and continuance of the world, God hath intended our passions to prevail over reason. The first is, the propagation of our species, since no wise man ever married from the dictates of reason. The other is, the love of life. . . ." ¹

The Houyhnhnms also have no special sensitivity for their young, Gulliver remarking that they "have no fondness for their colts or foals." The Yahoos may be unwholesome and unsanitary, and the Houyhnhnms the exact opposite; but in the Age of Freud the Houyhnhnms' inner check and restraint, careful birth control and eugenic breeding suggest frigid austerity and almost puritanical inhibition, despite the curious contradiction of their psychiatrically modern nudism: the horse master "could not understand why nature should teach us to conceal what nature has given. That neither himself nor family were ashamed of any parts of their bodies" (Chap. III). However, because this issue is somewhat confused by the licentious Yahoos, who are also nudists equally unashamed of what nature has given them, we can only conclude that the Houyhnhnms are modest and the Yahoos immodest according to nature.

Also, as beings the Yahoos symbolize irrationalism to us, while the horses may be the embodiment of reason, horse or common sense. But such sense is not the same as wisdom, unless the term be narrowly defined as the ability to accept passively one's lot and one's level on the social scale. For this is what the horses mean by living happily according to nature. Clearly, this definition is synonymous with spineless prudence, with a type of spiritlessness that dynamic citizens of the western world cannot tolerate today. Moreover, how can true wisdom be developed in what appears to be a completely innocent state of being? How can the horses be exemplars of true wisdom when they are also strictly abstinent, unimaginatively complacent, humorless (in-

¹ *Prose Works*, III, 309. All references to Swift can be found in the *Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Temple Scott (London, 1897-1908).

capable of a horse laugh), parochial and dogmatic like Captain Pocock of Bristol (mentioned by Gulliver in the beginning of the voyage) who was "a little too positive in his own opinions, which was the cause of his destruction, as it hath been of several others"? Such reason (or, perhaps, blissful ignorance) knows no humility: "He [the master horse] knew it was impossible that there could be a country beyond the sea, or that a parcel of brutes could move a wooden vessel whither they pleased upon water. He was sure no Houyhnhnm alive could make such a vessel, or would trust Yahoos to manage it" (Chap. III). This conceit of the master horse comes dangerously close to the sin of pride, an odious type of human arrogance that Swift particularly enjoyed satirizing.

Lastly, while it is true that their life is so simple and circumscribed as to render them incapable of any subtleties (even their vocabulary is limited because, as Gulliver observes, their wants and passions are few), they also appear to be unconcerned about matters of conscience and religious belief. Interested in preserving moral and humane values as secular beings, they are not in these respects alien to the secular ideals of a humanist culture and therefore, perhaps, need not be criticized for failing to develop an inner spiritual and religious life. In an age dominated by secularism, this trait may then be held to their advantage.

Such may be a contemporary but unhistorical reading of the meaning of the horses. Obviously, such is not always Gulliver's opinion or Swift's. From our point of view, it is clear that the horses are not paradisaical creatures, as they are to Gulliver. Their society may be superficially attractive to a minority in our culture because it is simple, stable, and orderly, and because it provides security to the citizens who are fortunate enough to have status. But it lacks the zest and spirit of the free society that predominates in our industrial civilization. Those who admire rugged individualists will undoubtedly be reluctant to accept the horses as utopian models of virtuous behavior, and, unlike Gulliver, will resist being hypnotized by the torpor of their primitive agrarian society.

Yet, when examined sympathetically on one level, in accordance with a part of the dramatic irony, the horses do become extremely attractive. Through Gulliver's eyes, it is obvious that the horses are for the most part angelic creatures, if a trifle cold and emotionless. Therefore, as they are already good creatures, the condition for the extinction of religion (which is meant for man in his depraved state) has been created. But, in this respect, Gulliver is like some of us in being deceived by the violent contrast with the Yahoos and cannot

at all think of the horses as possibly degrading symbols. Apparently rejecting those secular ideals generally implicit in a dynamic way of life, Gulliver admires them for the rational sanity, simplicity, and serenity of their agricultural way of life close to external nature, their order and stability, their class and caste system which is maintained by careful breeding and in which the less talented are servants; their natural and unsophisticated sense of right (they have no sense of wrong), their natural reason, restraint and inner check; their natural piety and learning; and their good health, the direct result of their vegetarianism. In sum, he admires practically every horse trait that he—only he, perhaps—finds agreeable: their sobriety, sanitation, and judicious sexual behavior (because, no doubt, he too is unconsciously frigid)—all these traits being comprehended in their natural horse sense which, to his disgust, he finds lacking in human beings or Yahoos. Only once can it be said that Gulliver is critical of the horses' insistence in applying reason too rigorously: "in my weak and corrupt judgment, I thought it might consist with reason to have been less rigorous" (Chap. X). Implicit in the scene wherein Gulliver is told of the decision of the general assembly to expel him from what he believes to be paradise is a sharp critique of a life of excessive reason that cannot tolerate a very acceptable human compromise.

And we as well as Swift would agree here with Gulliver—but for different reasons—that the life of such rigorous reason does not answer all our human needs. We would reject it because our secular psychology has set up as an ideal reason cooperating in a nice balance with emotion and instinct; and in the story this ideal is realized in the form of the Portuguese Captain Don Pedro, who reconciles reason and passion, that is, Christian compassion. Swift, however, would reject the life of horse reason because his religion has set up an ideal of reason supplemented by faith. To Swift, right reason without conscience cannot be a moral and religious guide. Therefore neither we nor Swift, unlike Gulliver, can believe that the horses are finely balanced creatures endowed with true wisdom.

A close reading of *Voyage Four* makes clear that Gulliver is basically not Swift (although he may occasionally merge with Swift here and in the preceding voyages) but rather a dramatic foil deliberately created for ironic effect. He is the gull by means of whom Swift produces the very desirable esthetic effect of reader participation and indirectly communicates his message. If Gulliver is not Swift in the last part of the travels, then it follows that everything admired by Gulliver need not be also admired by Swift. As a matter of fact,

Swift shows Gulliver as one who has been truly deceived by appearances, and at the end of the voyage Gulliver becomes the object of his satire. By ridiculing Gulliver, Swift indicates the inadequacy or the absurdity of a life of pure uncompromising reason like that of the Houyhnhnms. If Gulliver under the influence of a misapplied horse sense is shown to be a misanthropic fool rendered unfit for normal human society, it is only right to infer that because he doesn't adopt Gulliver's worshipful attitude Swift intimates at the close of *Voyage Four* that common-sense is not enough to live by and that the horses are not utopian models of virtue and piety. The horses, Swift thus concludes, are not only symbolic characters but also objects of a dramatic satire like the simple-minded Gulliver and the obviously nasty Yahoos.

The crucial question is on what grounds Swift himself would reject horse sense as the sole basis of the ideal life. Of course, his reasoning would not be the same as ours; it might unconsciously resemble Gulliver's—that such rationalism, too rigorously applied, produces absurdities in human behavior. But there is yet another cogent reason why Swift would find the life of the horses intolerable—one to which our age is not particularly sensitive; and one completely overlooked by a secular-minded Gulliver (indeed, it would not be consistent with his character for him to state it). But it is related to what has been already mentioned about the nature of true wisdom.

It is precisely this subtle irony that has been generally neglected in interpretations of the fourth voyage. Through Gulliver, Swift apparently glorifies the horses and their natural way of life, and he intensifies the favorable attitude by a contrast with the repulsive, excremental Yahoos. But in reality Swift means to be critical of their lack of faith.

Once this notion of Swift's religious criticism of the horses is accepted as a possibility, its ideological basis may be stated. There is a fundamental conflict of religious values between Swift and the horses; and some of Swift's most cherished beliefs, those which he considered fundamental to a virtuous Christian life, are not embodied in the leading horses in particular or practiced in Houyhnhnmland in general. The religion of Houyhnhnmland is not the religion by which Swift lived. If this is so, then Swift intends the irony to indicate that the life of horse sense is imperfect because irreligious, no less than arid and rigorous. Unenriched by faith, which to Swift is absolutely funda-

mental to the truly religious life, the horses can then aptly become the objects of his satire.

Just exactly how would Swift, who cannot rightfully be identified with either his own created character or his secular readers of the past and present, have evaluated the horses were he to employ the religious standards of a rigorous Church of England man? Of course, to answer this question a detached historical point of view must be maintained, and we must try to put aside our own notions as we place ourselves in Swift's mind, place and time. Undoubtedly, Swift as a tory high-churchman would have smelled heresy in the horses' religion—or their lack of it; more particularly, he would have detected more than a faint resemblance between their religious views and practices and those of the deists, and he would have inferred that the coincidence of belief on four crucial points is so uncanny as to be certainly more than accidental. In short, as symbols of his religious irony, the horses could only represent deists, contrary to the argument recently presented by Professor Sherburn; and, as we well know, Swift detested the deists of his day.²

1. *Rational Religion of Nature.* The controversy caused by the deists developed as a result of their insistence upon the sufficiency of natural reason to establish religion and enforce morality. The deists

² Since this essay was written, the opinion that Swift was satirizing deists in *Gulliver's Travels*, and particularly in the fourth voyage, has been confirmed by at least one scholar. Irvin Ehrenpreis, in his article "The Origins of *Gulliver's Travels*," *PMLA*, LXXII (1957), states unequivocally that Swift was criticizing deistic thought in the horses. But Ehrenpreis' evidence is sometimes critically irrelevant and generally tenuous, his argument therefore being highly speculative and unconvincing (see, e.g., pp. 889-92 of his article). Ehrenpreis also believes that Swift was directing his barbs at Bolingbroke, one of the exponents of deism (pp. 892-5), citing as evidence the fact that Swift had a horse which he called "Bolingbroke." Ehrenpreis concludes (p. 898) that "his commentary on the fourth voyage helps to destroy the misconception of innumerable scholars and critics who identify the author, through Gulliver, with the values of the Houyhnhnms. Swift was himself saying, in the fourth voyage, that anyone who believes in the adequacy of reason without Christianity must see himself as a Houyhnhnm and the rest of mankind as Yahoos. By innuendo, he argues that the deists cannot, with any consistency, believe their own doctrines." Very recently, George Sherburn has written a long rebuttal of Ehrenpreis' thesis: see *MP*, LXVI (1958), 92-97. Professor Sherburn categorically denies that the church is touched by Swift's satire in the fourth voyage. In another article, "Gulliver and the Struldbruggs," *PMLA*, LXXIII (1958), J. Leeds Barroll sees in Gulliver's praise of the usefulness of virtue in the celebrated Struldbrugg episode an ironic attack on freethinking deists: "Gulliver's optimistic plans and hopes of teaching

challenged and distrusted the supernatural, Biblical miracles, the story of man's creation, all miraculous evidences of a special Christian revelation. *Natural*, to the deists, meant *reasonable* and *un-mysterious*: God is everywhere revealed in nature and so thoroughly revealed in it that there is no need of accepting the exclusive dogmas of a limited religion like Christianity, which is communicated but to a few. And whatever is communicated but to a few cannot be true.

True, reason was appealed to by all controversialists—even Swift (in his "Further Thoughts on Religion"): "The Scripture-system of man's creation is what Christians are bound to believe, and seems most agreeable of all others to probability and reason." But Swift, unlike the deists who attacked the Scriptural version of creation, is a fundamentalist: "Adam was formed from a piece of clay, and Eve from one of his ribs."³ So the orthodox, of whom Swift was one, added the appeal to the special revelation of the Christian church: in the "Letter to a Young Clergyman," Swift notes ". . . the absolute necessity of divine revelation to make the knowledge of the true God and the practice of virtue more universal in the world."⁴ Thus, contrary to the deist view, the orthodox did not hold reason sufficient to establish religion and enforce morality without belief in the Scriptures and such doctrines as heaven and hell, immortality, and the last judgment. Swift met the challenge of the deists squarely; he knew they were undermining religion as he understood it. He did not accept common sense in matters of faith: "If I were directly told in Scripture," he says in his sermon "On the Trinity," "that three are one, and one is three, I could not conceive or believe it in the natural common sense of that expression. . . ."⁵

'virtue' suggest that Swift has created him, for the time being, as a representation of . . . defects in heathen philosophizing, and it is thus possible to regard the exposition of Gulliver's ambitions and his subsequent disillusionment as a casual stroke against the 'free-thinking' position" (pp. 49-50). Similarly, such an exclusive praise of "virtue" seems to suggest that something may be radically wrong with the horses.

³ III, 310.

⁴ In "Remarks Upon a Book Intituled *The Rights of the Christian Church*," Swift identifies natural with unrevealed religion: ". . . where religion hath not been revealed; in natural religion" (*Prose Works*, III, 104). See also for this point on the necessity of mystery and revelation his satirical abstract, "Mr. Collins' *Discourse of Free-Thinking*"; also the following from his sermon "Upon Sleeping in Church": "Nor . . . are preachers justly blamed for neglecting human oratory to move the passions, which is not the business of a Christian orator, whose office it is only to work upon faith and reason."

⁵ *Prose Works*, IV, 130.

Swift opposed the deistic notion of the reasonableness of Christianity, but supported the miracles as divine mysteries beyond human understanding. He particularly did not wish to test religious doctrine by subjecting it to the scrutiny of reason, and he had the orthodox church divine's conventional skepticism of reason because alone it may yield results dangerous to established religion: "I am not answerable to God for the doubts that arise in my own breast, since they are the consequences of that reason which He hath planted in me; if I take care to conceal those doubts from others, if I use my best endeavors to subdue them, and if they have no influence on the conduct of my life."⁶ He recognized the fact that he had, in his official position, to defend every fundamental tenet of Christianity which the Church of England held, "whether those opinions be true or false";⁷ and he found it wholly reasonable (in the Trinity sermon) that "God should require us to believe mysteries, while the reason or manner of what we are to believe is above our comprehension, and wholly concealed from us."⁸ And again in the "Letter to a Young Clergyman":

I do not find that you are anywhere directed in the canons or articles to attempt explaining the mysteries of the Christian religion. And indeed, since Providence intended there should be mysteries, I do not see how it can be agreeable to piety, orthodoxy, or good sense to go about such a work. For to me there seems to be a manifest dilemma in the case: if you explain them, they are mysteries no longer; if you fail, you have labored to no purpose. . . . neither is it strange that there should be mysteries in divinity as well as in the commonest operations of nature.

Placed in such a context, the "religion" of the horses is seen to be not what an orthodox church divine like Swift professed but what he attacked. Being reasonable creatures who are close to "nature," the horses cannot tolerate miracles or mysteries in their religion. Nor are they trinitarians. They abide by the rule of reason, unsupplemented by revelation; and they distrust the supernatural. Unlike the orthodox, they are never skeptical of the mere understanding, accepting its revelations unquestioningly. For example (Chap. VIII), Gulliver observes

⁶ "Thoughts on Religion," III, 308.

⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 307.

⁸ IV, 133. This is Swift's way of adapting Locke's category, "above reason." See also the "Trinity Sermon": "It is an old and true distinction, that things may be above our reason, without being contrary to it."

that the Houyhnhnms' "grand maxim is to cultivate Reason, and to be wholly governed by it. . .," their reason being intuitive, perhaps, as it "strikes you with immediate conviction." The Houyhnhnm master makes nature and reason the basis of the conduct of life; he "thought nature and reason were sufficient guides for a reasonable animal . . . in showing us what we ought to do, and what to avoid" (Chap. V).⁹ Because of the very nature of their being, the horses do not have the capacity for skepticism.

The horses, "a people so . . . naturally disposed to every virtue, wholly governed by reason" (Chap. IX), are incapable of an *O altitudo*; they have no sense of the sublime mystery, no special reverence for the dignity and purity of matters religious. In short, their religious rationalism is nothing less than deistic, and any reader who thinks that it is an acceptable substitute for the true faith is, according to Swift, being grossly deceived.

2. *Religion of Morals.* Deism deprived religion of its great emotional appeal, as it was made to appeal mainly to the intellect. Emotion, mystery, enthusiasm—all were denied validity in the realm of "true" religion. Instead, intellectual assent to a group of logical propositions and adherence to a set of practical rules for moral guidance were considered adequate substitutes for revealed religion—for the incentives of the messianic resurrection and the last judgment. The deists placed no special emphasis on the Bible as the sole ground of morality, looking to moral sanctions elsewhere, in the moral and religious beliefs held in common by all people, everywhere and at all times. They therefore were enabled to evolve a sentimental view of human nature as generally benevolent, which supplanted the Christian view of its essential corruption through a fall from grace.

But Swift held strictly to the prevailing Christian view of the origin of evil and based his morality squarely on the authority of the Bible and its essential truths. True, he was like the deists in opposing the excesses of enthusiasm; but he insisted that the *revelation* of what is good and evil must come from the Bible: ". . . I affirm original sin, and that men are now liable to be damned for Adam's sin, to be the foundation of the whole Christian religion. . ."¹⁰ He contended that

⁹Note the use of the word "sufficient," a word of great significance in the deistic controversy. The Houyhnhnm master also believes "That our institutions of government and law were plainly owing to our gross defects in Reason, and by consequence, in Virtue; because *Reason alone is sufficient* to govern a rational creature" (Chap. VII). My italics.

¹⁰"Mr. Collins' *Discourse of Free-Thinking*," III, 178.

a common moral sense is not enough to live by, presumably because it is open to the same objections as the intellect: although it may be properly the instrument of human wisdom, it is not instrumental toward salvation.

For example, in his sermon "On the Testimony of Conscience," Swift maintained that "there is no solid, firm foundation of virtue, but in a conscience directed by the principles of religion."¹¹ Therefore, almost in reply to Shaftesbury's notion that man is naturally a virtuous being, and is endowed with a "moral sense" which distinguishes good from evil,¹² is Swift's criticism of moral honesty and honor (neither of which requires religion) as "two false principles, which many people set up in the place of conscience, for a guide to their actions."¹³ Likewise, in the Trinity Sermon, he insisted on the moral importance of faith: "Let no man think he can lead as good a moral life without faith, as with it; for this reason, because he who hath no faith, cannot by the strength of his own reason or endeavours, so easily resist temptations, as the other who depends on God's assistance in the overcoming of his frailties, and is sure to be rewarded for ever in heaven for his victory over them." That Swift opposed an ethic divorced from the special revelations of the Christian religion is also evident in his sermon "Upon the Excellency of Christianity."

The same cannot be said for the horses. Their attitude essentially favors the secular moralist position. They believe that the good life and wisdom can be achieved by living in accord with certain basic moral and natural principles, exclusive of any special Christian incentives such as the Redemption by and the Resurrection of Christ. Believing, apparently, in a universal deity of love identified with the "first mother" (Chap. IX), which is an ironic parody of God the Father and the First Mover, they see no need when they die for church rituals performed by a clergy. They express no feelings of joy or grief at the prospect of death—and no religious feelings about this significant event are particularized by Gulliver. Undoubtedly, the horses did not fear the torments of hell, one of the principal points of the "free-thinking" controversy (the doctrine of future rewards and

¹¹ IV, 124.

¹² C. A. Moore, "Shaftesbury and the Ethical Poets in England, 1700-1760," *PMLA*, XXXI (1916), 269.

¹³ IV, 122. Also "Letter to a Young Clergyman": "The system of morality to be gathered out of the writings or sayings of those antient sages [the heathen philosophers], falls undoubtedly very short of that delivered in the Gospel; and wants, besides, the Divine Sanction which our Savior gave to his."

punishments). They have neither gospel nor sacraments, neither established church nor religious authority. Thus their natural religion is purged of what the deists believed to be essential superstitions—the accretions of an artificial civilization and a corrupt self-seeking and self-perpetuating clergy.

Indeed, Swift does not allow Gulliver to discuss the Houyhnhnm faith, possibly because Gulliver could observe none; but it is curious that Gulliver does not even mention the absence of what he knows as religion in Houyhnhnmland. Once, when Gulliver is made to indicate (accompanied by an undertone of Swift's sarcasm) the religious causes of war in Europe (Chap. V), the master horse makes absolutely no response that could help illuminate the text. He does not stop to ask Gulliver to explain further in detail, as he does with some other matters—the English law, for example—and so inadvertently but clearly reveals his insensitivity to matters of conscience.

With regard to their view of horse nature (not Yahoo nature, which supplies them with their vocabulary of sin and corruption), they are benevolists incarnate: "Friendship and Benevolence . . . the two principal virtues among the Houyhnhnms" are "universal to the whole race" (Chap. VIII). Being "endowed by nature with a general disposition to all virtues" (Chap. VIII), they have no horse sense of sin, much less a Christian sense of sin; hence, they have no need for the doctrines of redemption and grace and the sacraments involved.

Again, therefore, insofar as they are not ruled by the Christian faith, as expounded in the Old and New Testaments, but accept only moral principles, which can be found in the sacred books of all religions, it can be concluded that the horses are in effect made to adopt deistic secularism—and that Swift intends an irony.

3. *Anti-Christ*. Not only did the deists oppose the mysteries of the church and refuse to accept the need of divine revelation, but they also challenged the mystery of the incarnation of Christ. They apparently believed Christ was a historical figure, not the Son of God and the sole savior of man from the mortal effects of the original sin. Thus, in effect, they generally disbelieved the fundamental mystery of Christian theology and the doctrine of a special providence for those who accept the faith.

That Swift believed in Christianity as the sole true religion and in the Savior as the Son of God scarcely needs documentation. As a doctrine fundamental to his belief in the Trinity, it was, he thought, beyond controversy. Two quotations from his "Thoughts on Religion" will suffice to illustrate his point of view.

To remove opinions fundamental in religion is impossible, and the attempt wicked, whether these opinions be true or false; unless your avowed design be to abolish that religion altogether. So, for instance, in the famous doctrine of Christ's divinity, which hath been universally received by all bodies of Christendom, since the condemnation of Arianism under Constantine and his successors: Wherefore the proceedings of the Socinians are both vain and unwarrantable; because they will be never able to advance their own opinion, or meet any other success than breeding doubts and disturbances in the world. *Qui ratione sua disturbant moenia mundi.*

The Christian religion, in the most early times, was proposed to the Jews and heathens without the article of Christ's divinity; which, I remember, Erasmus accounts for, by its being too strong a meat for babes. . . . But, in a country already Christian, to bring so fundamental a point of faith into debate, can have no consequences that are not pernicious to morals and public peace.¹⁴

To what reactionary extremes Swift will go to protect religious doctrine is suggested in his "Project for the Advancement of Religion" where he advocates legal restrictions on the press "to prevent publishing of such pernicious books, as, under pretense of free-thinking, endeavour to overthrow those tenets in religion which have been held inviolable, and cannot, therefore, with any colour of reason, be called points in controversy, or matters of speculation," as the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ.¹⁵

Nor does the fact that the horses have no symbolic equivalent in their religion for Christ as the sole Redeemer of men need further elaboration.

Perhaps it may be objected here that because the horses are supposedly not "fallen" and sinful creatures they have no real need for redemption by Christ. This objection can be met by again pointing to the ridicule cast upon Gulliver for accepting literally the horse way of life and by again noting that the horses believe simply in the sufficiency of reason. The horses are surely not of the elect because the story action, their unqualified religious rationalism, and their imperfections of character cannot logically permit an inference of a state of grace.

¹⁴ III, 307-8. "The doctrine of the Trinity is the most fundamental point of the whole Christian religion" ("Mr. Collins' *Discourse*," III, 176; also III, 178).

¹⁵ III, 44.

According to Swift, therefore, the horses are heretical. Naturally, however, Swift's method does not allow him an unambiguous statement of this heresy. Thus, in this respect, he could only indirectly through his dramatic irony damn the deists of his day by making the horses adopt their tactics. For the deists also never dared openly and positively to state their opposition to Christ as *the* Son of God because of the obvious dangers involved in such blasphemy.

4. *Anti-Clericalism.* The deists were supposed to be recognized by their opposition to priestcraft. Their belief in a universal God reigning over all peoples everywhere and at all times, a God who has revealed the essential truths of religion (which are moral) to all men, results logically in a denial that God's will is alone made manifest through the ministers of the ecclesiastical establishment. The deist view of the church is thus non-traditional, non-institutional, and non-authoritarian.

That Swift, an ardent clergyman of the established Church of England, recognized this challenge for what it was—as dangerous subversion of clerical prestige and authority and the established order—is seen in his vigorous frontal attack on the deists for irreligion and atheism in his ironic “Argument Against Abolishing Christianity”: “Nothing can be more notorious than that the atheists, deists, socinians, anti-trinitarians, and other subdivisions of free-thinkers are persons of little zeal for the present ecclesiastical establishment; their declared opinion is for repealing the sacramental test; they are very indifferent with regard to ceremonies; nor do they hold the *jus divinum* of episcopacy.” Time after time, he identifies the free-thinkers, or deists, with atheists who undermine all religion: “. . . the atheists, libertines, despisers of all religion and revelation in general, that is to say, all those who usually pass under the name of free-thinkers. . . .”¹⁶ And atheists, of course, could be given no toleration, no unlimited liberty of expression. Swift was an inflexible uniformitarian in religion: a Church of England man, he writes in his “Sentiments of a Church of England Man,” “is very far from closing with the new opinion of those who would make it no crime at all, and argue at a wild rate, that God Almighty is delighted with the variety of faith and virtue,

¹⁶ “Sentiments of a Church of England Man,” III, 53. See also “A Preface to the Bishop of Sarum’s Introduction” (III, 151): “. . . Protestants who are no Christians, such as atheists, deists, free-thinkers, and the like enemies to Christianity.” See also III, 155, 162 from the same essay; and III, 179-180, 183, 192 from “Mr. Collins’ Discourse” for a sampling.

as He is with the varieties of nature. To such absurdities are men carried by affectation of free-thinking. . . ."¹⁷ Could so intolerant a religious totalitarian as Swift accept the competing religion of the horses with complacency?

Although like the deists Swift complains of the low state of the clergy, he urges that the cure be not the abolishment of the clerical system but the raising of moral and theological standards. Perhaps, Swift goes on to say in his "Project for the Advancement of Religion," careful censorship of a cleric's religious beliefs may produce hypocrisy, but (much as nominal Christians are to be disliked) "hypocrisy is much more eligible than open infidelity and vice; it wears the livery of religion; it acknowledges her authority, and is cautious of giving scandal."¹⁸ Elsewhere ("Sentiments of a Church of England Man") he states positively,

A Church of England man hath a true veneration for the scheme established among us of ecclesiastical government; and though he will not determine whether Episcopacy be of divine right, he is sure it is most agreeable to primitive institution, fittest of all others for preserving order and purity, and under its present regulations best calculated for our civil state: He should therefore think the abolishment of that order among us would prove a mighty scandal and corruption to our faith, and manifestly dangerous to our monarchy. . . .¹⁹

Swift thought all deism destructive, never constructive. The church structure is so important that he could even justify hypocrisy so that the church would be preserved. A similar comment in his "Thoughts on Religion" again suggests fanaticism as it indicates how far he was willing to go to preserve appearances of decorum and order: "The want of belief is a defect that ought to be concealed when it cannot be overcome."²⁰

The horses are not actively anti-Christ; they simply neglect to

¹⁷ III, 60-61.

¹⁸ III, 40-41. He defends the function and duty of the clergy to teach the precepts of religion from the Bible in the satiric essay on "Mr. Collins' Discourse," III, 171, 174. Swift's views on the relative usefulness of hypocrisy seem sincere. The deist view, on the other hand, is somewhat like that of the Rev. William Bentley of Salem who preached in his sermon at Boston, 1790, that "the honest devotion of a heathen" was more acceptable to God than "the hypocrisy of a Christian."

¹⁹ III, 54-5.

²⁰ III, 308.

worship Him or His symbolic equivalent. Likewise, they are not actively anti-clerical; they are simply non-clerical. There is not one priest or minister or the equivalent in Houyhnhnmland; nor are there any special forms of worship. Because of the very nature of rational and moral discipline, they adopt deistic ideals and employ no clergy or ritual, no theological ordinances or dogma. Swift's irony, as we noted above, does not permit him openly to satirize religion or its ritual as he had done in *A Tale of a Tub*. But Swift makes his point in another way: these forms of an institutionalized Christianity—which Swift deemed essential for religion—are discredited by their absence. Thus the horses, like the deists, do not wish to preserve even the superficial appearance of religion as they have effectively "abolished Christianity." But from the point of view of Swift's orthodox religious position, in so doing they are merely the instruments of his satire whereby he can condemn another heresy that was undermining the structure and authority of the established church.

It is true that the red herring of atheism is never raised to smear the reputation of the horses; but this restraint is a necessary part of the subtlety of Swift's attack. Swift cannot, in an irony of this nature, spoil the effect he desires by crudely crying atheism. Such name-calling would be too obvious, and would prevent a "bite."

In the light of these remarks, it would be fruitful to know the master Houyhnhnm's reaction to Gulliver's "explanation" of free-thinking, which the sarcastic Swift has Gulliver associate with cheating, pimping, lying, poisoning, canting, libelling, and other follies and vices. Is the master being "bitten"? But Swift leaves the Houyhnhnm's reaction open to conjecture (Chap. VI).

When placed in their proper historical and ideological context, then, the horses are in every important respect like the deists. Their ethical rationalism and naturalism approximate the deistic attitude. Their belief in the sufficiency of reason and common sense to solve all the problems of life and their distrust of the supernatural; their reliance on nature exclusive of doctrinal faith; their failure to organize their religious experiences within the ideological framework of a sacred book like the Bible; their failure to evolve a theology or ritual; their neglect of a religious establishment—all suggest an unorthodox way of life that Swift, a highly sensitive and aggressive clergyman of the established Anglican church, could scarcely extol, could scarcely recognize as religion in the first place. That Swift fought deism as a subversive force is well known. What is not so well known, however, is

that he carried on the struggle against such religious heresy through the symbolic Houyhnhnms in his most famous work, *Gulliver's Travels*, and so again "reconciled divinity and wit" ("The Author Upon Himself," l. 12).

And when this anti-deism is correlated with what has been said of the defective character of the horses from our point of view at present and to some extent from Gulliver's point of view in the fiction, can there be any doubt of the fact that Swift intended to satirize the horses and to point a moral by means of a satire on their imperfections?

Unfortunately for Swift, however, this satire has not been appreciated by the readers of *Gulliver's Travels*. Misled by the dramatic contrast with the irrational and brutish Yahoos who are clearly symbolic of the carnal evil that is embodied in degenerate man-in-the-flesh, they assume Gulliver's distorted point of view and can only think the horses model creatures who are admirably suited as symbols of right reason. Thus for the moment made unaware of the mock-serious tone and insensitive to the ludicrous incongruity of the burlesque association of the horse figure with reason and deism, they are gulled and bitten. They fail to consider the horses as symbols not of the perfectly sublime and divinely balanced man-in-the-spirit but of the very earthly man-without-spirit-or-faith. They are completely oblivious of the intended burlesque, and so of the possibility of spiritual evil being embodied in the horses who, in their own way as creatures characterized by a certain overbearing stiffness and pride, are as incomplete and imperfect and deformed as the physically repulsive Yahoos. It is because he wishes to emphasize this inner evil of the horse nature, reason without conscience or faith, and to show the difficulty of detecting it, that Swift deliberately makes their outer figure unimportant and misleading (while at the same time he is enabled thereby to satirize man's vain pride in his physical beauty).

The greater the subtlety of the irony, the greater the probability of misinterpreting it—or even failing to detect it. But the fault is not entirely in the insensitivity of simple-minded readers, but in the exaggerated delicacy and complexity of an over-elaborate irony. It may be that Swift, after being so devastatingly misunderstood with the reckless indiscretions of *A Tale of a Tub*, masked the religious satire in the Houyhnhnms so cautiously, carefully, and successfully that in the end, paradoxically, it proved to be abortive and self-defeating.²¹ More-

²¹ For example, pious James Beattie was so "bitten" and deceived. Mistaking Swift's irony, he believed that Swift was sincerely praising the horses, and so he

over, one other contributing factor, by placing the horses' way of life in a favorable light, has made objective critical interpretation difficult: the progress of naturalism and secularism since the eighteenth century.

raised the question whether Swift really believed "that religious ideas are natural to a reasonable being, and necessary to a moral one." Noting that the Houyhnhnms are presented by Swift "as patterns of moral virtue, as the greatest masters of reason, and withal as completely happy, without any religious ideas, or any views beyond the present life," he then accused this Christian Divine of blaspheming human nature and God.—From *Essays on Poetry and Music as they Affect the Mind* (Edinburgh, 1778), pp. 42-4, as quoted in Merrel D. Chubb's "The Criticism of Gulliver's 'Voyage to the Houyhnhnms,' 1726-1914," in *Stanford Studies in Language and Literature* (Stanford Univ., 1941), 215-216.

The Ideologue as Artist: Some Notes on "Gulliver's Travels"

Despite the close attention critics have given to *Gulliver's Travels* in recent years, several features of the book have not been observed, or have not been observed with the precision necessary for complete comprehension of their significance. First of all, I would like to define a structural principle of the narrative which, it seems to me, is central to its over-all meaning.

In his description of each of the societies Gulliver visits, Swift carefully elucidates the relationship which exists in that society between the present and the past. In Chapter VI, after describing the institutions of Lilliput, Gulliver adds: "In relating these and the following laws, I would be understood to mean the original institutions, and not the most scandalous corruptions into which these people are fallen by the degenerate nature of man."¹ The events of Book One define the particular kind of degeneracy involved. Corruptions have grown, Gulliver concludes, "by the gradual increase of party and faction," having first been introduced by the "grandfather of the Emperor now reigning." Thus, we are persuaded, the recent past in Lilliput was markedly superior to the observed present.

The same is true in Book Three. Of those whom Gulliver meets in Book Three, the most sympathetically portrayed is Munodi, one of

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¹ Quintana and Ehrenpreis differ on whether or not this passage was added to material taken from the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* in the interest of making such material consistent with Swift's satiric purpose. See Ricardo Quintana, *The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift* (London and New York, 1953), pp. 290 ff.; also, Quintana, *Swift, An Introduction* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 145 ff.; and Irvin Ehrenpreis, *The Personality of Jonathan Swift* (Harvard, 1958), pp. 83 ff. Quintana senses a discord between this passage and the tone of the surrounding material. Such a discord, if admitted, would merely be a fault of Swift's craftsmanship, and would not affect my analysis of Swift's meaning, which is based on what the book, as completed, says.

the Lords of Balnibarbi. Though the surrounding countryside shows not "one ear of corn or blade of grass," Munodi's estate can boast of vineyards, cornfields, and meadows. His house is a noble structure, built "according to the best rules of ancient architecture," and its "fountains, gardens, walks, avenues, and groves, were all disposed with exact judgement and taste." Here, very briefly, we find suggested the kind of culture Swift admired, and in defence of which he wrote *Gulliver's Travels*. Munodi laments, however—"there being no third companion" to overhear him—that despite the beauty and utility of his estate, he probably will soon be forced to tear the whole thing down, such is the innovating temper of the country, and rebuild it "after the present mode." If Lilliput had been corrupted by greed, by lust for power, by "faction," Balnibarbi has been corrupted by an idea, an idea which Swift hated: that *any* change is a change for the better.

In contrast to Lilliput and Balnibarbi, Brobdingnag, Gulliver is careful to tell us, provides an example of the kind of society men can achieve if they are virtuous. Among those nations where Yahoos preside, he says, meaning among nations run by men, "the least corrupted are the Brobdingnagians, whose wise maxims in morality and government it would be our happiness to observe." Gulliver, who by the time he gives this advice has lived among the completely rational, the "glorious," Houyhnhnms, is surely telling us that the best thing men can do is try for a government like that of Brobdingnag: for the Brobdingnagians have been able to preserve the moral order and have held in check, though not, of course, completely overcome, their own Yahoooness.

In Brobdingnag, Gulliver reports, *the grandfather of the present king* presided over a "general composition" which settled a civil war. The wise institutions of the kingdom had their origin in that "composition." As Arthur Case makes clear, this "grandfather" represents Queen Elizabeth.² Swift, it may be seen, is comparing Lilliput and Brobdingnag as alternative versions of England, and saying that "faction," which later became a destructive force, had its origin in Elizabeth's reign, but that the basis for good government was established then too. Thus England *might* have continued to resemble Brobdingnag, had it pursued wise policies, the policies Elizabeth had originated and to which, Swift thought, Harley and Bolingbroke were seeking to return. But instead, ridiculously, tragically, England has become a Lilliput. After Gulliver describes England to the King of Brobdingnag, the

² Arthur E. Case, *Four Essays on Gulliver's Travels* (Princeton, 1945), p. 111.

King replies: "I observe among you some lines of an institution, which in its original might have been tolerable, but these half erased, and the rest wholly blurred and blotted by corruptions."³

In the third chapter of Book Four, Gulliver first perceives his own resemblance to the Yahoos. Despite the deformity of the Yahoos, Gulliver, when he looks closely at one, can see "in this abominable animal a perfect human figure." The Yahoo, to be sure, seems to be a degenerated human: "the face of it indeed was flat and broad, the nose depressed, the lips large, and the mouth wide." Nevertheless, despite these distortions, Gulliver sees that the Yahoo in all essentials resembles a man.

Here we have the culmination of a series of analogies which go far toward defining the meaning of *Gulliver's Travels*. Each of the degenerated human societies Gulliver visits had once been orderly, had once been to some degree rational. Thus, we see, this Yahoo stands in the same relation to Gulliver, a civilized human being, as Lilliput does to *its* original, uncorrupted form; or, again, as Balnibarbi does to that fragment of *its* past, Munodi's estate; or, and this is the point, as the contemporary England of Walpole does to that "institution" which, as the King of Brobdingnag says, "in its original might have been tolerable."

Like Plato and Dante, then, Swift conceived of politics and psychology as interrelated. The corruption of man and the corruption of the state were synchronous. The Yahoos represent what Englishmen will become as they sink into disorder and irrationality, when, that is, they have ceased to strive toward an ideal of order and have suffered the consequences. Gulliver finds, indeed, that the first Yahoos probably *came* from England. Those first Yahoos, he says, who many ages ago appeared in Houyhnhnmland together on a mountain, "may have been English, which indeed I was apt to suspect, from the lineaments of their posterity's countenances, although very much defaced."

Are the Whigs, the innovators, whom Swift depicts as controlling Lilliput, Laputa, Balnibarbi, and, by implication, England, on the way to Yahooodness? For Swift, if my argument has been valid, the answer

³ It is true, of course, that in Brobdingnag Gulliver comes upon a "little old treatise" which claims that in ancient times men were larger and better, and that the Brobdingnagians Gulliver sees are a "dwindled race." Even if the treatise is correct, this would not affect my argument. If the world's later ages are in fact subject to decay, then so are the Lilliputians and the Balnibarbians. And Brobdingnagian institutions have, even if only relatively, resisted more effectively man's tendency to degenerate.

was yes: the Whigs and the innovators had abandoned the ideal of order.

But what of the Houyhnhnms, so puzzling to most readers of the book? It may be argued, I think, that the Houyhnhnms define a condition of order in society, an absolute of order, hierarchical and static, which human society can never achieve, but which should be retained by men as a corrective, a polemical, ideal. Only by *trying* to achieve perfect order can we in fact achieve the proximate order of Brobdingnag.

And yet the Houyhnhnms, I think, have a psychological as well as a social meaning. They may be taken as a metaphor expressive of an inward condition, a condition in which the soul is so ordered, so "mastered," in Socrates' sense of the word, that it is free from both the storms of external events and the conflicts of desire. If the Houyhnhnms do suggest such an ideal of inner discipline, then Werner Jaeger's description of Socratic order can describe with equal precision the condition represented by the Houyhnhnms: "Only the wise man, who has tamed the wild desires in his own heart, is truly self-sufficient. He is nearest to God: for God needs nothing."⁴ Thus, to extend one step further, into the psychological realm, the series of political analogies which we have discerned in *Gulliver's Travels*, we may say that just as the ideal of order, sought but never achieved, preserves Brobdingnag from anarchy, so the "wise man's" pursuit of inner discipline moves him toward a condition of psychic order which will inform and shape his life, whatever may happen in the external world.

The attempt to establish such a psychological meaning for the Houyhnhnms encounters certain real difficulties. First, why did Swift make them *horses*? Then too, in describing Brobdingnag, Swift had shown us a stable society, and he had made it clear that Brobdingnag was stable because it had retained its allegiance to its ancient institutions; and yet, though Swift does show us good individuals in *Gulliver's Travels*—the King of Brobdingnag, Glumdalclitch, Captain Pedro de Mendez—he does not analyze very clearly for us the sources of their goodness. Although we get a very clear idea of the kind of society Swift admired, we do not see defined with comparable precision his notion of the virtuous man; we do not encounter a carefully elucidated ideal of self.

This difference in mode—a careful social analysis, but a perfunctory

⁴ Werner Jaeger, *Paideia II* (Oxford, 1957), p. 56.

treatment of individual virtue—leads us directly to the problem which *Gulliver's Travels* raises but does not satisfactorily solve. As we shall see, Swift, by the time he wrote this book, doubted that the sources of virtue were accessible to men. In consequence of this doubt he was driven to the position that the maintenance of social institutions was the only means of preserving a semblance of moral order.

Let us first, however, look to one of Swift's early poems, one of his Pindarics, for an expression of that ideal of self which, when he wrote *Gulliver*, was still valid for him as a definition of virtue, but which had come to seem humanly unattainable. When, after writing these Pindarics, he abandoned the mode of praise, he did not abandon his conception of virtue. Rather, he became convinced that men could not live up to such a conception, and that in their folly they were destroying the last barrier against their own irrationality, the established order. Thus the ferocity of his polemic was not due to his own emotional disorders, as nineteenth century liberals comfortably believed. Rather, it derived its energies from his perception of what he took to be the desperate condition of his country. We miss in Swift, it is true, that *celebration* of order which we find in Plato and Dante, who were so like him in so many ways. But his failure to celebrate as they did proceeded from his awareness of the threat to his world: there was no time left for praise. Far from being a misanthrope, he perhaps loved his world too much.

"I have had an ode in hand these five months," Swift wrote to his cousin Thomas in 1692, an ode "inscribed to my late Lord of Canterbury, Dr. Sancroft, a gentleman I admire at a degree more than I can express. . . ." William Sancroft, the nonjuring Bishop of Canterbury, had been deprived of his offices in 1690 because of his passive resistance to theories implicit in the Revolution: that the people could depose their anointed king, and that the Church could be subordinate to the state. Though Swift's ode is far from impressive as poetry, it is important because it defines for us more clearly than any of his other works what he considered to be the nature of personal virtue.

Sancroft's virtue, Swift tells us, proceeds from his relationship to Truth. This Truth is immutable. "Truth is eternal," the ode begins. Truth, we find, does not "depend on giddy circumstance / Of time and place." Men, however, can inhabit only an "inferior world," and only a "reflection" of the Truth, "weak shapes wild and imperfect," is accessible to them. Nevertheless, though men can never have a perfect apprehension of the Truth, certain men, such as Sancroft, have

intimations of it, and provide for us the "brightest pattern earth can show / Of heaven-born Truth." What Swift seems to be saying in this ode is that an exceptional man like Sancroft may, as in the Platonic system, climb the ladder of perception toward eternal Truth. In contrast to Plato, however, who thought that the eternally true and beautiful ideas were accessible to man at the top of the ladder—we recall Socrates contemplating them, rapt and ecstatic, on the battlefield at Potidaea—Swift judged that even the best men, even a Sancroft, could have only an imperfect perception of absolute Truth.

But if, at the time he wrote this ode, Swift thought that even a Sancroft could not perceive Truth perfectly, we are obliged to raise the question of the value of such Truth for the moral life. In what sense can a partially inaccessible Truth be prescriptive for conduct? Swift, it is clear, assumed that such Truth, though partially beyond human apprehension, was unchanging, and he saw in Sancroft's allegiance to unchanging principles a "reflection" of the eternal order of Truth. Thus the order of Sancroft's life, like the order of the good society, is an analogue of Truth. Those who follow "opinion, dark and blind," gaze, in the fourth stanza, "at the weathercock of state / Hung loosely on the church's pinnacle." Because the weathercock veers, the multitude believes the church has changed, and "holy Sancroft's motion quite irregular appears / Because it's opposite to their's." They are wrong, however: it is not Sancroft or the church that has changed, but the state.

Thus for Swift, as for Plato, both politics and the individual life had to be brought into harmony with what Truth, or Reason, was felt to be. Though Swift, when he wrote this ode, was less sanguine than Plato about man's ability to perceive absolute Truth and order his life according to it, he thought, like Plato, that the essence of Truth was permanence and order. These assumptions, brought into conflict with a deepening pessimism, are central to *Gulliver's Travels*. As we have seen, although Brobdingnag cannot, since it is a human community, aspire to perfect order, it can achieve an analogue of order, a human order. Similarly, though Sancroft cannot actually wear "his Master's crown, inwreathed with thorn," he can remain true to the idea of religious order despite the "theologic levellers" of an "outcast age."

This attempt of mine to relate *Gulliver's Travels* to the early verse runs counter, in a sense, to Quintana's firm assertion that after the early verse the "Platonic element—the contrast between our world and a realm of perfect truth—never again appeared in Swift's thought. It was

utterly foreign to his mind, and its momentary appearance in the ode is evidence of an odd sort that he was yet uncertain of his intellectual base."⁵ Such a statement, however, does not make the necessary discriminations. Swift did indeed in a certain sense abandon his early idealism, but such idealism was scarcely "foreign to his mind." Rather, it generated the tragic problem of his most famous book. "The Restoration," Quintana observes, "was no greater shock to Milton than was the Whigs' assumption of power to Swift."⁶ It seemed to him that every selfish interest in the nation had triumphed over reason and order. By the time he wrote *Gulliver*, a decade later, Swift was a Platonist *manqué*. There is in the book a realm of absolute Truth, but only the Houyhnhnms, horses, not *men*, have access to it, because only they are free from "passion" and "interest." "Neither is reason among them," Gulliver tells us, "a point problematical, as with us, where men can argue with plausibility on both sides of the question; but strikes you with immediate conviction; as it needs must do where it is not mingled, obscured, or discolored by passion or interest."

The problem Swift faced, then, was of how moral order could be maintained among men who, as he thought when he wrote *Gulliver*, were completely cut off by the conditions of human nature from the perception of unchanging Truth. His answer, we have seen, was that they should hold to the institutions which did seem to work. When they cut loose from these, as he judged that they had, all seemed lost. He did not, it should be noted, consider the problem of how wise institutions started in the first place. Although his evaluation of human nature was as dark as Augustine's, he did not, in contrast to Augustine, have any sense of the possibility of illumination through grace.

It may very well be—and to pursue the question would be to embark upon unprofitable epistemological speculations—that when Swift assumed Truth to be eternal and unchanging he was merely projecting into the universe his own desire that society remain settled and orderly, instead of becoming the scene of innovation and revolution. His philosophical conclusions might simply have been his moral values "writ large." But whether his idea of Truth was a projection of his moral values, or, alternatively, a shadow of a perception, it successfully energized his attack on what he took to be the forces of moral anarchy: dissent in religion, individualism in economics, Grub Street taste in literature, irresponsibility in science, Walpolism in politics.

⁵ *The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift*, p. 36.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

His idea of society derives, we may see, from the main tradition of Renaissance Humanism. We recall the Ulysses of *Troilus and Cressida*, for example, who saw in the heavens an orderly paradigm of society ("The heavens themselves, the planets . . . Observe degree, priority, and place."); or Spenser's Artegall, who sent Talus, the instrument of Justice, to destroy the Giant who would "weigh the world anew." Such assumptions about the desirability of order, assumptions which Swift shared, had provided the ethos of a society which, though surely capable of injustice and cruelty, was certainly not unique in that respect, and which, just as surely, did encourage both the diversity of social roles and the stability of social relations which Jonson celebrates in that remarkable poem, "To Penshurst."⁷

Further establishment of Swift's relation to Renaissance Humanism may be found in Edwin Benjamin's article, "The King of Brobdingnag and Secrets of State." Benjamin is able to demonstrate Swift's affiliation with the anti-Machiavellian Humanists of the Renaissance. The King of Brobdingnag, Benjamin shows, represents the type of Prince who rules without guile and intrigue, rules openly and virtuously. He has not "reduced politics to a science." Power, the anti-Machiavellians argued, should be only a means to the good life, which they defined as the maintenance of order, in the soul and in society. To Machiavelli's man of *virtu* they opposed the ideal of the virtuous ruler, as embodied in the King of Brobdingnag, in Erasmus' Christian Prince, in Elyot's Governour, or in the Patriot King of Swift's friend Bolingbroke.⁸

Few writers have been more aware of their historical filiation than Swift. He saw himself as testifying to the end of that period of European culture which his great model, "whose works he must have known almost by heart,"⁹ Rabelais, had helped to inaugurate. Like Rabelais, Swift wrote of giants, voyages, and extravagant adventures. Detail upon detail in *Gulliver* can be traced directly to Rabelais: Gulliver urinating on the fire in the palace, the warfare between

⁷ Fritz Caspari, *Humanism and the Social Order in Tudor England* (Chicago, 1954), provides a thorough account of the social philosophies of the Renaissance Humanists.

⁸ Edwin B. Benjamin, "The King of Brobdingnag and Secrets of State," *JHI* (October, 1957), 572-579.

⁹ W. A. Eddy, *Gulliver's Travels: A Critical Study* (Princeton, 1923), p. 57. Eddy's detailed study of sources makes his statement authoritative. See also Spence: "Dr. Swift was a great reader and admirer of Rabelais, and used sometimes to scold me for not liking him enough (Pope)," quoted from *The Dunciad*, ed. James Sutherland (London and New Haven, 1953), p. 62.

Gulliver and the pigmies, the language in which the King of Brobdingnag expresses his virtuous principles of government. Swift and Rabelais, indeed, both fought for the Humanist ideal of culture, using ridicule against the pedants and crude specialists, whether theological or scientific. But Rabelais was in the insurgent stages of Humanism. His laughter convinces us of the goodness of the world, of the safety with which we can undertake a general liberation. The laughter of Books One and Two of Rabelais leads up to the question of marriage, opens up into the adventures of the last two books. Swift, on the other hand, though using many of Rabelais' details, tries to convince us of the dangers of change. He therefore plays principally upon our fears, employing fear, as did Hobbes, in the interest of conservatism: our instinctive fear of being crushed by larger people, our fear of personal ugliness, and of unclean odors. In *Gulliver's Travels* we see an entire order of feeling once again becoming politically relevant. Rabelais' laughter turns bitter here, and at the end of Book Four is silent. For Swift saw that the Renaissance was over, and the Augustinian truths about human nature, which had been combatted by Aquinas and effaced by the Platonism emanating from the Florentine Academy, were returning with a vengeance to the modern world.

I have, of course, been directing attention primarily to the political and social content of *Gulliver's Travels*, which seems to me the best way to define the meaning of the book. Such an account of the book does not, indeed, exhaust the possibilities of interpretation, and will, if it is a proper account, be reinforced, rather than contradicted, by other interpretations. We can read *Gulliver's Travels* as a kind of "pilgrim's progress"—the way, I think, that it usually is read—as, that is, the story of Gulliver's discovery that human pride is absurd. Such an interpretation would be in perfect harmony with the view of the book I have been attempting to establish, that it is a "defence of order." A man fully aware of his own impulse toward irrationality, toward "passion" and "interest," would not be eager to upset an established order which, developed in the course of centuries, provided a sturdy defence—though not, as it turned out, an impregnable one—against the irrational.

Gulliver's Tragic Rationalism

The problem of Jonathan Swift's misanthropy is still open to examination. John B. Moore recognized in Gulliver "an example of man getting knowledge or wisdom," and went on to suggest that this knowledge or wisdom was essentially misanthropic: "To infect others with his own ardent misanthropy, Swift could not have chosen a more effective human instrument than Lemuel Gulliver, it would seem."¹ The extent to which Swift himself should be associated with the misanthropy of the hero of *Gulliver's Travels* is a problem that lies at the heart of any true understanding of the satirist's work. The possibility exists that a solution may be found by a fresh appraisal of Gulliver's tragic rationalism in "A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms." The society of horses found therein, so often considered as an example, at least in part, of Swift's ideal, still remains a cold and unfriendly habitation for mankind. There is little in it that appeals to the deeper and more enduring human emotions. Indeed, it is an emotionless life that is recommended. The Houyhnhnms are, in some respects, "perfect children of the enlightenment,"² but they lack true humanity. The concept of the Houyhnhnms as representative of eighteenth century rationalism is at the heart of the contention of Irvin Ehrenpreis that they are suggestive of a "deistic view of human nature"; but it is

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¹ John B. Moore, "The Role of Gulliver," *MP*, XXV (1927-8), 470. The various critical attitudes toward Gulliver's fourth voyage are traced in Merrel D. Clubb's "The Criticism of Gulliver's 'Voyage to the Houyhnhnms,' 1726-1914," *Stanford Studies in Language and Literature*, ed. H. Craig (1941), pp. 203-232. The place of Swift's masterpiece in the tradition of literary utopias is studied by Charlotte Dege in *Utopie und Satire in Swift's Gulliver's Travels* (Frankfurt, 1934). On Swift's misanthropy, see also the famous letter to Pope (September 29, 1725) with its statement of his love for the individual and his detestation of "that animal called man" (*Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, [Oxford, 1956], II, 325).

² Ricardo Quintana, *The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift* (New York and London, 1936), p. 323.

unlikely that the satire is directed against deism, for, as George Sherburn perceptively observes, "there is no clear glimmer of religion in Gulliver's fourth voyage that would indicate any attitude toward revealed Christianity, whether favorable or unfavorable."³ A careful examination of the fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels* and an attempt to explore further the society of horses, not as an utopian society, but as an ironical portrait of the life of reason carried to excess, may offer an interesting approach to a better comprehension of Swift's ideas.

Swift's comic⁴ introduction of the Houyhnhnms to his reader finds Gulliver pinned against a tree in an effort to escape the filth of the Yahoo pack. He is rescued by what Gulliver believes to be an ordinary horse. Finally another appears. The two Houyhnhnms touch hoofs, walk off a short space and begin to deliberate, pacing back and forth, as though examining some important "affair of weight." The portrait seems to be a picture of two "philosophers," pondering over a great world problem. It may be accepted as a burlesque of the meditating tendencies of some members of that group, a group which to Swift included all experimenters, especially those investigating the natural sciences. Swift, moreover, further links his horses to philosophers, at least in reference to their external appearance, when he describes their intense scrutiny of Gulliver's person: "They were under great Perplexity about my Shoes and Stockings, which they felt very often, neighing to each other and using various Gestures, not unlike those of a Philosopher, when he would attempt to solve some new and difficult Phenomenon."⁵

³ Irvin Ehrenpreis, "The Origins of *Gulliver's Travels*," *PMLA*, LXXII (1957), 880; George Sherburn, "Errors concerning the Houyhnhnms," *MP*, LVI (1958), 93.

⁴ The comedy of *Gulliver's Travels* has frequently been suggested. Carl Van Doren ("Introduction," *Gulliver's Travels*, The Modern Library, New York, 1931) saw Swift as a misanthrope, and viewed his work as a savage, unrelenting, and extravagant attack upon mankind. More significantly, however, he presented Swift as a great writer of comedy. He noted that the satirist's hate and scorn of mankind emerged to make men laugh, that Swift, "however hot and furious his passions, was a comic writer. Comedy was his language, just as English was" (p. x). See also John F. Ross, "The Final Comedy of Lemuel Gulliver," *Studies in the Comic* (Berkeley, 1941), 175-196; and Edward Stone, "Swift and the Horses: Misanthropy or Comedy?" *MLQ*, X (1949), 367-376.

⁵ Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford, 1941), p. 210. The comparison of the Houyhnhnms to philosophers at this point appears to be merely casual. However, the satirist's attitude toward certain types of philosophers elsewhere, and his descriptions of the meditating tendencies of the

The comedy of this passage is uncomplimentary to the Houyhnhnms. The extravagant phrase "great perplexity" is ironical, and there is obvious humor in the portrait of these horses "neighing to each other" in intelligent fashion. The entire third book of *Gulliver's Travels* is an attack on a certain breed of "philosopher," but a more striking echo hits the mind as it recalls Gulliver's experience among the Brobdingnagians. After a somewhat indecorous passage, in which Gulliver describes his difficulties in discharging the necessities of nature, he apologizes to the reader: "I hope, the gentle Reader will excuse me for dwelling on these and the like Particulars; which however insignificant they may appear to grovelling vulgar Minds, yet will certainly help a Philosopher to enlarge his Thoughts and Imagination, and apply them to the Benefits of publick as well as private Life" (p. 78).

Indeed, Swift does not always see much difference between a philosopher and a fool: "For, to speak a bold Truth, it is a fatal Mischance, so ill to order Affairs, as to pass for a Fool in one Company, when in another you might be treated as a Philosopher."⁶

In the "Digression concerning Madness" in the *Tale of a Tub*, Swift analyzes the make-up of the introducers of new schemes in philosophy. Among them he lists a number of the great scientists and philosophers of the past. He is unsparing in his satire: "Let us next examine the great introducers of new Schemes in Philosophy, and search till we find from what Faculty of the Soul the Disposition arises in mortal Man, of taking into his Head to advance new Systems. . . . Because it is plain, that several of the chief among them, both ancient and modern, were usually mistaken by their Adversaries, and indeed by all, except their own Followers, to have been Persons crazed, or out of their Wits. . . . Of this Kind were Epicurus, Diogenes, Appolonius, Lucretius, Paracelsus, Descartes, and others."⁷ In the light of these passages, Gulliver's comparison of the Houyhnhnms to philosophers supports the hypothesis that Swift intended them to be looked upon ironically.⁸

horses, suggest a more deliberate intention. Future reference in my text to *Gulliver's Travels* will be by page number to this edition.

⁶ Jonathan Swift, "A Tale of a Tub," in *Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford, 1939), I, 106.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ The Houyhnhnms have at times been recognized as other than ideal. For example Ross, in *Studies in the Comic*, p. 176, points out that modern critics have new objections to the fourth voyage; they feel that it "is psychologically unconvincing. Even if we accept the Yahoos, we cannot accept the Houy-

A careful evaluation of the social habits of the Houyhnhnms suggests a similarity between their way of life and that to which the social theories of the Whig government might lead if carried to excess. Within the framework of this interpretation, the limitations that may be discovered in the society of the Houyhnhnms become a part of Swift's carefully ordered design—a part of a complex attack on the philosophic position of his political opponents.

When *Gulliver's Travels* was published in 1726, some twelve years had passed since the Whigs had risen to the controlling position in parliament, and George I had begun the long reign of the House of Hanover on the English throne. It was the beginning of an era of growing prestige for parliament. A system of government, new in many respects, was developing under the direction of men brought up and nurtured on the philosophical tenets of John Locke, and particularly on his ideas concerning government. Basil Williams suggests that "the Whigs found in Locke's two great works on civil government and toleration an effective antidote to the Tory thesis, and all their statesmen from Stanhope to Chatham adopted his creed as their political Bible."⁹

Swift, although he originally had Whig leanings, turned in the direction of Tory sentiments around 1710. His pamphlets against Whig policies in Ireland, the *Drapier Letters*, and his association with the Scriblerus group of Tory wits form ample evidence of his political philosophy. This period of enlightenment in philosophy, government, and science was a fitting time for Swift's satire on man. He ably deals with the excesses of the scientific method in the third book. The individual barbarity and depravity of mankind finds its representation in the Yahoo. Royalty, the court, and the variety of parasites who surround it form a wide basis for Swift's art throughout. But those aspects of the early century which are representative of the philosophical speculations of John Locke, and the growing importance of parliament, find little obvious condemnation in the satire of *Gulliver's Travels*. It is with this in mind that an examination of the Houyhnhnm society, in relation to the social and political philosophy of Locke, seems pertinent.

T. O. Wedel has observed that "men in Locke's state of nature, like

hnhnms; and furthermore, the drab and limited life of the horses is wholly unsatisfactory as a Utopia, as Swift himself should have shown."

⁹ *The Whig Supremacy 1714-1760* (Oxford, 1939, reprinted with corrections 1949), p. 4.

the Houyhnhnms, are rational creatures," living "in a state of liberty without license, everyone administering the laws of nature for himself, laws of temperance and mutual benevolence."¹⁰ Other significant points of similarity may also be observed. Locke, in his *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), examines the family as a social unit. He recognizes, of course, that the reason for the union of male and female is procreation. But he observes that it is not merely for this. There is also the need for the proper care of offspring, and this is the source of the necessity for keeping the family together. Unlike other animals, the woman, constantly capable of conceiving, is unable to alone provide for the nourishment of her children:

And herein, I think, lies the chief, if not the only reason, why the male and female in mankind are tied to a longer conjunction than other creatures—viz., because the female is capable of conceiving, and, *de facto* is commonly with child again, and brings forth too a new birth, long before the former is out of a dependency for support on his parents' help and able to shift for himself, and has all the assistance due to him from his parents, whereby the father, who is bound to take care for those he hath begot, is under an obligation to continue in conjugal society with the same woman longer than other creatures, whose young, being able to subsist of themselves before the time of procreation returns again, the conjugal bond dissolves of itself, and they are at liberty till Hymen, at his usual anniversary season, summons them again to choose new mates.¹¹

Certain observations on these ideas presented by Locke seem appropriate. His approach to the problem is thoroughly rational. Nowhere is there a concern for love, affection, or like social emotions as reasons for the prolonged family unity. What is best for the continuation of the species is the paramount criterion. The conjugal relationship of

¹⁰ T. O. Wedel, "On the Philosophical Background of *Gulliver's Travels*," *SP*, XXIII (1926), 443. He further comments that "even Swift's Utopia is the Utopia of Locke, not Plato's philosopher's kingdom, nor St. Augustine's City of God" (p. 449). For a somewhat different view see *Gulliver's Travels*, ed. Ernest Bernbaum (New York, 1920), pp. x-xii. A general study of Locke's influence on the literature of the eighteenth century may be found in Kenneth MacLean's *John Locke and English Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, 1936).

¹¹ John Locke, *Of Civil Government Two Treatises* (New York and London, 1924), p. 156 (Bk. II, #80).

men and women differs little from the mating habits of non-rational animals. When applied to man's family society, Locke's speculations seem to preclude any consideration of feelings and emotions as factors in determining the proper conduct of the people concerned.

The society of the Houyhnhnms is equally devoid of emotional qualities. There is civility between parents and an ordered benevolence among members of the family. But this same attitude exists toward all members of the community. Blood ties are of no importance. The Houyhnhnm parents "have no Fondness for their Colts or Foals, but the care they take in educating them proceeds entirely from the Dictates of Reason." Gulliver's master shows "the same Affection to his Neighbor's Issue that he has for his own." There are regulations to govern the size of each family. It is all perfectly rational, devoid of feeling, and governed by the best needs of the community as a whole:

When the matron *Houyhnhnms* have produced one of each Sex, they no longer accompany with their Consorts, except they lose one of their Issue by some Casualty, which very seldom happens: But in such a Case they meet again; or when the like Accident befalls a Person, whose Wife is past bearing, some other Couple bestows on him one of their own Colts, and then go together a second Time, until the Mother be pregnant. This Caution is necessary to prevent the Country from being over-burthened with Numbers. (p. 252)

Marriage in the Houyhnhnm society is also arranged on a purely rational basis. There is no acquaintance with love, courtship, settlements, or like arrangements on the part of the citizens. The young horses are brought together because of the desire of parents and friends. "It is what they see done every Day; and they look upon it as one of the necessary Actions in a reasonable Being" (p. 253).

Machinery is provided for the proper regulation of family life. Every four years, for a period of five or six days, there is a meeting of a representative council of the nation. This assembly arranges for the replacement of children lost by accident, where the mother is past breeding, and deals adequately with similar problems. It is, indeed, a society free from marital care, worry, and disturbance. It is an enlightened approach to life and an apt portrait of what life might be if reason, and only reason, were relentlessly applied to the conduct of conjugal society.

Although Swift is not merely copying the reasons suggested by

Locke for family life among human beings, the society of the Houyhnhnms has much in sympathy with Locke's society in the lack of emotion and the rejection of affection and love as a guide for conduct. Beyond this, both systems are intimately concerned primarily with the problem of the continuation of the species. Locke places no limit on the number of offspring but is concerned only with the correct and adequate care of whatever children may derive from a relationship. He, of course, is facing a real problem and making a judgment on the existing facts of life. Swift has more opportunity to speculate. He can mold his society as he desires. But if the two essential principles governing Locke's thought, the purely rational approach, and the concern for the proper preservation of the species, are followed to a completely logical conclusion, the result is not in conflict with the utopian society of Swift's horse-people.

If the attention is turned from family life proper to a broader view of society, Locke's comments on the rights of servants are important:

Master and servant are names as old as history, but given to those of far different condition; for a free man makes himself a servant of another by selling him for a certain time the services he undertakes to do in exchange for wages he is to receive; and though this commonly puts him into the family of his master, and under the ordinary discipline thereof, yet it gives the master but a temporary power over him, and no greater than what is contained in the contract between them. But there is another sort of servant which by a peculiar name we call slaves, who being captives taken in a just war are, by the rights of Nature, subjected to the absolute dominion and arbitrary power of their masters. These men having, as I say, forfeited their lives and, with it, their liberties, and lost their estates, and being in the state of slavery, not capable of any property, cannot in that state be considered as any part of civil society, the chief end whereof is the preservation of property.¹²

Here is recognized a basis not only for a strict caste system, differentiating clearly between master and servant, even when the latter is a free man, but also for the justification of slavery in the social order. The fact that the Houyhnhnms make use of such a system needs no documentation. The inferior horses are allowed to breed more because of the need for servants. The primary concern for the

¹² Locke, *Two Treatises*, pp. 157-158 (Bk. II, # 85).

young is their usefulness. Higher classes are given the leisure of sufficient grazing time, while the groups marked off for the servant classes are provided only with an opportunity to gather their grass to be brought home and eaten at such time as they can be spared from labour. The attitude seems to stress the physical function which each individual animal can play in the whole community. There is little personal freedom or right, and this condition is aggravated among the poor. The caste system that prevailed in England during the early eighteenth century found the government generally unsympathetic to the problems of the lower classes. Much of this attitude was encouraged by the Whig interpretation of Locke's teaching.¹³

Certain inconsistencies in the caste system of the Houyhnhnms, if considered as an ideal one, have long been recognized. William Eddy found Swift falling short in his effort to prove his proposition "that man is an ungainly, ill-constructed creature, and the horse a physical paragon." He felt that Swift had become careless and that misanthropy had obscured his judgment: "Again, Swift is inconsistent in representing the Houyhnhnms as divided into social castes, that dare not mingle. How is it that these 'horses' who live in gentle accord, free from all those instincts and institutions which have resulted in inequality among men, have their own aristocracy and their own slaves? The answer is simply that Swift was careless of his story; the fires of misanthropy obscured his judgment, and vitiated his argument."¹⁴ Eddy has here recognized the problem, but his solution is incorrect. To feel that Swift, the consummate artist, became careless and had his judgment distorted at the very culmination of his greatest artistic achievement, is repellent to a sympathetic reader of *Gulliver's Travels*. But what other conclusion is possible if we accept the land of the Houyhnhnms as a desirable utopia?

Locke's political theory stresses the importance of the legislative and executive power of civil society as a means of preserving the rights of the people: "And herein we have the original of the legislative and executive power of civil society, which is to judge by standing laws how far offenses are to be punished when committed within the commonwealth; and also by occasional judgments founded on the

¹³ Basil Williams suggests that Locke's "teaching encouraged a Whig oligarchy to regard one of the chief objects of government to be the protection of their own rights of property and to adopt an attitude of neglect or indifference to social evils affecting the lower classes of society" (*The Whig Supremacy*, p. 5).

¹⁴ William A. Eddy, *Gulliver's Travels, A Critical Study* (Princeton, 1923), pp. 188-189.

present circumstances of the fact, how far injuries from without are to be vindicated, and in both these to employ all the force of all the members when there shall be need."¹⁵

Swift's attack against the law, as it functions in the Whig society of England, is direct and complete. He hits at law, lawyers, and judges. They are trained to show that black is white. Judges will rule against the side of justice, Gulliver declares, especially in cases involving property rights:

Now, your Honor is to know, that these Judges are Persons appointed to decide all Controversies of Property, as well as for the Tryal of Criminals; and picked out from the most dexterous Lawyers who are grown old or lazy: And having been byassed all their Lives against Truth and Equity, lie under such a false Necessity of favouring Fraud, Perjury and Oppression; that I have known some of them to have refused a large Bribe from the Side where Justice lay, rather than injure the *Faculty*, by doing any thing unbecoming their Nature or their Office. (p. 233)

The Houyhnhnms have no need for a strict judicial system. Since they are all virtuous, all problems that arise are settled quietly and equitably by the general assembly. This assembly, like the English parliament of the eighteenth century, exercises a judicial as well as a legislative function. But the justice of the decision in the case of Lemuel Gulliver may well be reviewed critically. One of the reasons for the expulsion of Gulliver from the house of his master is that the practice of Yahoo and Houyhnhnm living under the same roof "was not agreeable to Reason or Nature, or a thing ever heard of before among them" (p. 263). In short, there was no precedent for it. In regard to the use of precedents in English courts, Swift expresses himself clearly: "These, under the Name of *Precedents*, they produce as Authorities to justify the most iniquitous Opinions: and the Judges never fail of directing accordingly" (p. 233). The same might well be said of decisions determined by lack of precedent.

Some form of legislative assembly is essential to Locke's system if the chief end of society, the preservation of property, is to be maintained:

. . . the people finding their properties not secure under the government as then it was (whereas government has no other

¹⁵ Locke, *Two Treatises*, p. 160 (Bk. II, # 88).

end but the preservation of property), could never be safe, nor at rest, nor think themselves in civil society, till the legislative was so placed in collective bodies of men, call themselves senate, parliament, or what you please, by which means every single person became subject equally, with other the meanest men, to those laws, which he himself, as part of the legislative, had established.¹⁶

The general assembly of the Houyhnhnms bears some important resemblances to the English parliament of Swift's day. The importance of the judicial function of parliament was greater then than today, particularly in matters of divorce.¹⁷ This control over family life may have suggested to Swift the strict discipline which the general assembly exerts over parents and children.

Gulliver describes the general assembly as an ideal governing body, but Gulliver is not Swift, and the reader may evaluate the effectiveness of this regulating body, and the justice of its decisions, irrespective of the interpretation of its chief victim.

The one subject debated by the general assembly is the Yahoos, their origin, whether or not they should be exterminated or castrated, and similar problems. Gulliver is, therefore, discussed but considered more civilized than the rest of the Yahoos by some tincture of reason. In all the discussions of the assembly, nothing of importance regarding these matters is really decided. It is as though the English parliament were to spend its time on the futile and profitless occupation of discussing what to do about a wild breed of horses. It is curious to note in this connection that parliament during the early eighteenth century, despite its prestige, accomplished little in the way of firm social legislation.¹⁸

Gulliver goes on to describe the civilization of the horse-people, their method of living, and their unemotional customs regarding death. He concludes: "I could with great Pleasure enlarge further upon the Manners and Virtues of *this excellent people*: but intending in a short Time to publish a Volume by itself expressly upon that Subject, I refer the Reader thither. And in the mean time, proceed to relate

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164 (Bk. II, # 94).

¹⁷ Williams, *The Whig Supremacy*, p. 23.

¹⁸ Williams comments (p. 9): "The absence of any constructive legislation to remedy the social ills of the age, and indeed of any appreciation of its need, is largely responsible for the bad name this first half of the eighteenth century has obtained as lacking in ideals and immersed in gross material aims."

my own sad Catastrophe."¹⁹ The irony is clear. Swift has Gulliver refer to the Houyhnhnms as an "excellent People" just as he is about to relate in detail their injustice to him.

One of the paramount problems in interpreting the work of Swift is his irony. When used as a device for satire much of its effectiveness depends upon the subtlety of its use. Often it is mistaken for direct statement, and both the attacked and their enemies react against the satirist. This difficulty is particularly acute when we consider Gulliver's attitude toward the Houyhnhnms. Are we not to interpret ironically Gulliver's veneration for the horses, who have treated him with obvious injustice? "At first, indeed, I did not feel that natural Awe which the *Yahoos* and all other Animals bear toward them; but it grew upon me by Degrees, much sooner than I imagined, and was mingled with a respectful Love and Gratitude, that they would condescend to distinguish me from the Rest of my Species" (p. 262). The Houyhnhnms deserve a reaction quite different from love and gratitude, but the life of pure reason has distorted the traveller's perspective.

The general assembly decides, in its wisdom, that despite his regimented life, lack of pride, and loyalty to his master, Gulliver is a danger to the state. Gulliver is struck by grief and despair at the decision that he must be sent away: "I answered, in a faint Voice, that Death would have been too great an Happiness; that although I could not blame the Assembly's *Exhortation*, or the Urgency of his Friends; yet in my weak and corrupt Judgment, I thought it might consist with Reason to have been less rigorous" (p. 264). The possibility of lapsing into his old corruption for lack of example terrifies him, but he realizes that the "weak and corrupt" judgment of a miserable Yahoo is not able to dispute with that of the Houyhnhnms.

The decision of the assembly is the result of fear and ignorance. It fails to recognize that Gulliver does not possess the predatory instincts of the Yahoos, that he is tame, and that he is rational. All this has been stressed by Gulliver's master, who must be believed since he cannot "say the thing which is not." But the assembly fails to evaluate his testimony correctly.

The irony of Gulliver's being reconciled at his departure, his offer to kiss his master's hoof, and the magnanimity of the horse's raising his hoof gently to the traveler's mouth, suggest that the life of pure reason has distorted Gulliver's vision and has led him to see only good

¹⁹ *Travels*, ed. Davis, p. 259. Italics are mine.

in the horses, despite the fact that they have treated him unjustly. But Swift sees things more clearly. He condemns what Gulliver approves.

Two main points have been suggested thus far in the analysis of the fourth book: (1) that the Houyhnhnm society does not represent Swift's idea of an utopian civilization, but is to be interpreted as ironical satire, and (2) that the satire is particularly, although probably not exclusively, directed against the extension of the political and social philosophy of John Locke, as implemented by the Whigs.²⁰ These suggestions may be reinforced by a consideration of Swift's attitude toward political change, and by an evaluation of the effect which the social life of reason has had on Gulliver by the time his travels are concluded.

The political thinking of Locke and Swift at the turn of the century was probably very similar. Both were Whigs, and both were in sympathy with the recent revolution. As Louis Landa points out in his introduction to Swift's sermons, the great satirist's political theory was the same as that which "had received classic statement in John Locke's second *Treatise of Government* (1690)."²¹ The argument was "that

²⁰ Sir Charles Firth in "The Political Significance of *Gulliver's Travels*," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, IX (1919-20), 237-259, saw Swift as attacking the foundations of the English social system: "Swift is no longer content with condemning the faults of the English society: he assails the foundations of the social system, capital, trade, and private property, exalting the natural life at the expense of civilization, and horses at the expense of men" (p. 248). Arthur E. Case, in *Four Essays on Gulliver's Travels* (Princeton, 1945), suggests that Swift's political theory was based in part on the Old Whig principle that "the three estates of the realm—king, nobles, and commons—were of equal importance to the state, the king being charged with keeping the balance between the others" (p. 108). It should be noted that the Whigs whom Swift opposed tended to diminish the power and authority of the king.

²¹ *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford, 1948), IX, 123. Swift's precise attitude toward Locke is an interesting problem. The philosopher is mentioned only rarely in Swift's works and is not generally condemned by the satirist, as Kenneth MacLean suggests: "Yet among Swift's numerous outbursts against philosophy Locke is spared at least in name, and is conspicuously absent from the ranks of the modern bowmen, as the philosophers are called in the *Battle of the Books*, though most of his associates are on the losing side of the conflict." MacLean suggests possible reasons of friendship for this. Locke refers to Sir William Temple as an author of great note in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and he spent the last years of his life at the manor of the Marsham family who became intimate friends of Swift (MacLean, *op. cit.*, p. 9).

Specific references to Locke in Swift's works are not especially revealing. They

James II had broken the compact between ruler and ruled and that the legislative power had validly altered the succession." Swift, unlike most Whigs and dissenters, saw a vast difference between the revolution against James II and the civil war which resulted in the murder of Charles I. He sets forth his views clearly in a sermon preached at St. Patrick's in 1726. He duly notes the evil effects of the puritan revolt. As a result of it aid was given to the Irish rebellion in which "the English parliament held the King's hands, while the Irish Papists were cutting our grandfather's throats." Moreover, there was a development of atheism and "King James II. was seduced to Popery; which ended in the loss of his kingdoms, the misery and desolation of his country, and a long and expensive war abroad" (p. 224). Swift justifies the revolt against James because the King was forcing a false religion on his subjects, and "no other remedy [could be] found, or at least agreed on" (p. 230).

Swift's advice to his congregation recommends moderation and the avoidance of new schemes and doctrines: "Between these two extremes,

are generally made in passing, and although they are usually respectful, they do not suggest an enthusiastic support for his ideas. In Swift's correspondence the reference to Locke in a letter to Rev. Thomas Sheridan on September 30, 1735 is not significant (*The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D.D.*, ed. F. Elrington Ball [London, 1913], V, 241). However, two letters to Swift suggest that he was not antagonistic to Locke, for they seem to assume that the mention of his name will not be unfavorably received. The Duchess of Queensbury (March 4, 1733-4) refers to Locke on education (*Correspondence*, V, 58), and Pope (September 15, 1734) refers to Bolingbroke's taking his place on the same shelf with Locke (*Correspondence*, V, 92).

Direct references in other works lead to essentially the same conclusion: in the letter of the Drapier to Lord Viscount Molesworth (*The Drapier's Letters*, ed. Herbert Davis [Oxford, 1941], p. 86); in Swift's essay, *The Public Spirit of the Whigs* (*Political Tracts 1713-1719*, ed. Herbert Davis and Irvin Ehrenpreis [Princeton, 1953], p. 43); in his discussion of Tindall's attitudes toward Christianity in *Remarks upon a Book* (*Prose Works*, ed. Davis, II, 80); and twice in his series of note references to Tindall's books (*Ibid.*, II, 85, 97). Perhaps his most revealing statement is in reference to the *Essay on Human Understanding*: "It is not his [i. e. Locke's] *Human Understanding*, but other Works that People dislike, although in that there are some dangerous Tenets, as that of innate Ideas" (*Ibid.*, II, 97). Is it possible that these "other works" included his political philosophy which was used as the basis for the Whig theory of government? We might note in this connection that he refers to Tindall's ideas of government as "A canting, pedantic Way, learned from Locke" (*Ibid.*, II, 85).

The evidence is inconclusive, but certainly does not contradict the thesis that Swift had objections to Locke's political philosophy, as implemented by the Whigs during the early eighteenth century.

it is easy, from what hath been said, to chuse a middle; to be good and loyal subjects, yet, according to your power, faithful assertors of your religion and liberties. To avoid all broachers and preachers of new-fangled doctrines in the church; to be strict observers of the laws, which cannot be justly taken from you without your consent. In short, *to obey God and the King, and meddle not with those who are given to change*" (pp. 230-231).

Swift's opposition is not to the theories of Locke as such, but to the social system for which they were used as a basis. The Whigs who are satirized are not the same as those whom Swift had earlier supported. The Whigs here attacked have extended the political philosophy of Locke to a point that he himself would probably not have approved. They have become champions of new schemes and of revolution, and for this reason they have become the butt of Swift's irony. He once wrote to Pope: "I remember it was in those times a usual subject of raillery towards me among the Ministers, that I never came to them without a Whig in my sleeve; which I do not say with any view towards making my Court; For the new Principles fixed to those of that denomination, I did then, and do now from my heart abhor, detest and abjure, as wholly degenerate from their predecessors."²² It is these new "degenerate" inheritors of Locke's social and political philosophy, the Whigs who have adopted new principles, that may well be ironically represented by Swift's Houyhnhnms.²³

A particularly persuasive argument against the theory that Swift intended the horse-society to be a prototype of an eighteenth-century utopia is found in the gradual, but complete and effective deterioration of Gulliver as a human being. Something happens to Gulliver on the fourth voyage that does not happen to him on the other three. Not

²² "A Letter from Dr. Swift to Mr. Pope," January 10, 1721, in *Works*, ed. Davis, IX, 29. In this connection Arthur Case's observation is pertinent: "Swift always insisted that he remained steadfast in his beliefs and that it was the parties that altered their creeds: history supports him in his" (*Four Essays*, p. 109).

²³ Z. S. Fink in "Political Theory in *Gulliver's Travels*," *ELH*, XIV (1947), 157, contends that "*Gulliver's Travels* has been too exclusively interpreted as a Tory satire on the Whigs. To adopt this point of view as representing the whole truth of the matter is to miss two main points in the elaboration of the first two books and one, moreover, which is recurred to in Book IV. The facts are that Swift wrote in the tradition of the partyless state dear to the hearts of the classical republicans of the Puritan era and their Renaissance predecessors." This theory assumes that the partyless state described in the "*Voyage to the Houyhnhnms*" is an element in Swift's Utopia. The real point at issue is whether or not Swift actually intended the horse-people to represent an ideal state.

only are his travels over, but the person who began his journeys as surgeon of the *Swallow* has in reality ceased to exist. Swift has obliterated his hero and submerged him in the measureless fathoms of rational despair. Throughout the first three books Gulliver retains a reasonable and respectful attitude toward his home and family. Despite the fact that he must travel, his relationship with Mary Burton, his wife, is affectionate and quite normal. He is not without a firm consideration of her interests. By the time Gulliver is put ashore in the land of the Houyhnhnms, he has lived a life that has abounded in danger and adventure. He has met with disillusion and disappointment. He has been subjected to fear and physical privation. He has seen the inhumanity and injustice of man, not only perpetrated against his fellows but most violently against himself. Without recrimination or serious complaint he has endured everything, and, above all, he is capable of finding happiness among men. The barbarity and cruelty of human life and the degenerate animality of man have failed to destroy him. But what of the rational idealism of the Houyhnhnms? What happens to Gulliver under the influence of the perfect life of reason? These are pertinent questions that require examination.

When Gulliver departs from the land of the Houyhnhnms, he is greatly changed. Under the careful tutelage of the horse-people, he has been led to see himself as a mere animal, a Yahoo. His reaction to civilization is thoroughly misanthropic. In great part he rejects the kindness of the Portuguese captain, Pedro de Mendez, and is unable to tolerate the company of fellow humans. Even his wife and children, waiting faithfully for his return, are less desirable company than two recently purchased horses.

Gulliver has become humble in the presence of the Houyhnhnms, but when in contact with ordinary people who, unlike himself, have not been educated by the enlightened rationalism of the horses, he takes on an assumed pride that is filled with contempt. When he condemns pride in the concluding paragraphs of the book, he is the vehicle for a master stroke of Swift's irony: "But, when I behold a Lump of Deformity, and Diseases both in Body and Mind, smitten with *Pride*, it immediately breaks all the Measures of my Patience; neither shall I be ever able to comprehend how such an Animal and such a Vice could tally together" (p. 280). Gulliver's pride is one of the most disturbing facets of his new rationalism.

The obvious comedy of Gulliver's return is mitigated by an overtone of tragic misanthropy, as the reader witnesses the destruction of

a mind striving beyond its depth for a rational formula in life. Herbert Davis has given a penetrating analysis of Gulliver's position: "Swift indeed allows Lemuel Gulliver to enter unsuspectingly the company of the eighteenth-century philosophers, and to believe for a while, as even the most skeptical of them did, even a Hume or a Voltaire, that humanity could enter into a heavenly city of its own if only it could be released from the bonds of superstition and ignorance. But Swift allowed Gulliver to go thus far only to undeceive him utterly and take from him his last illusion."²⁴ Gulliver has his last illusion taken from him, and the result is the misanthropic insanity of the traveler. But it should be remembered that this is not Swift's misanthropy. If it were, he could not have described it so acutely. Quite the contrary is true. The satirist sees clearly the condition of his hero, and the source of his troubles.

²⁴ Herbert Davis, *The Satire of Jonathan Swift* (New York, 1947), p. 104. J. B. Moore ("The Role of Gulliver") observes that Gulliver's "final revelation of wisdom has been apparently to refrain from human contact—a revelation convincing enough to transform a philanthropic Gulliver" (pp. 479-80). Arthur Case also recognizes Gulliver's transformation: "Swift shows us at the end of the fourth voyage his conception of the effects which would be produced in the mind of an intelligent man who spent a long period in the company of creatures who were perfect in every way" (*Four Essays*, p. 120). The reader may well ask whether or not Swift really intended the Houyhnhnms to represent "creatures who were perfect in every way" in the face of Gulliver's deterioration.

The Salome of Arthur Symons and Aubrey Beardsley

It is well known that much *fin de siècle* British poetry took its inspiration and manner from the other artistic media, particularly from painting and music, and that the degree and frequency of the borrowings make this period highly germane to a study of the interrelationship of the arts. John Davidson, William Ernest Henley, William Sharp, Arthur Symons, John Addington Symonds, and Oscar Wilde gave Whistlerian titles to their works and presented Whistlerian subjects and moods;¹ they sought effects similar to those of the French Impressionists, and transferred their visual interest in the evanescent play of sunlight over natural surfaces to a related interest in the vague and shifting nuances of human emotion;² they reflected in their work the subjects and manners of Edgar Degas and Toulouse Lautrec;³ and they wrote "symphonies" of sound and color.⁴ The

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¹ See my "Whistler and the Poets of the 1890's," *MLQ*, XVIII (1957), 251-261.

² Among other works see William Sharp's "Transcripts From Nature," Davidson's "Laburnum and Lilac," Wilde's "Impressions: Le Jardin" and "Le Réveil-lon," and Henley's "London Voluntaries." William Sharp said of his own intention: "In verse, as in painting, there is a borderland for impressionism pure and simple, for the suggestion of a certain color and emotion . . ." (Introduction to *Poems: Selected and Arranged by Mrs. William Sharp* [New York, 1912], pp. ix-x). See also Geoffrey Bullough, *The Trend of Modern Poetry* (London, 1934), pp. 7-9, and Jerome H. Buckley, *William Ernest Henley: A Study in the "Counter-Decadence" of the 'Nineties* (Princeton, 1945), pp. 188-189.

³ Symons is particularly relevant here. In *Cities and Sea-Coasts and Islands* (London, 1918), p. 208, he announced: "I tried to do in verse something of what Degas had done in painting." Also see his *From Toulouse Lautrec to Rodin: With Some Personal Impressions* (London, 1929).

⁴ See John Addington Symonds' *In the Key of Blue and Other Prose Essays* (London, 1893), Wilde's "symphonies" in various colors, and Henley's "London Voluntaries."

major aesthetic stimuli for these attempted fusions of the arts are common matters of literary history: Ruskin's early aesthetic, much of the Pre-Raphaelite endeavor, Whistler's struggle to forge precise distinctions between the morality of art for its own sake and art for *life's* sake, Pater's elaborate conclusions, and the work of Swinburne, Rossetti, and the French "decadent" writers.

This paper will examine one such literary effort, that of Arthur Symons in his "Studies in Strange Sins: After the Designs of Aubrey Beardsley." The seven poems of this sequence are a tour de force of inter-art relationship since they derive, in varying degrees, from Symons' highly personal response to the work of Beardsley the graphic artist, Moreau the painter, Wilde the dramatist, and Huysmans the novelist-critic. My purpose is to chart these connections, to judge Symons' performance, and to present certain questions inherent in such a poetic endeavor.

It is not surprising, in the first place, that Symons should have borrowed from other arts; in addition to being one of the most prolific, though highly uneven, minor poets of the period, he was an important art critic and an acquaintance of several leading British and continental artists (Degas and Lautrec in particular). His ear was attuned to the major aesthetic nuances and innovations of his time, and he is credited with a significant role in the introduction of French Impressionism to England and French Symbolism to his generation and to the major English and American poets of the twentieth century.⁵

In his verse sequence Symons deliberately tried to enrich his own art form by drawing upon related media. Though the sequence is far from being great poetry, in addition to its worth as an exceptional document in the study of literary pathology, it points up the special demands on creative genius which such a conscious inter-mingling makes—the artist, who is apt to remove himself from a direct experience of life,⁶ invites final comparisons between the quality of his work and

⁵ Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (New York, 1957), p. 107, says of Symons: "But above all he wrote the book out of which the important poets of the early twentieth century learnt the elements of French symbolist poetic." Bullough, p. 8, and Richard Ellmann, "Introduction" to Arthur Symons' *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (New York, 1958), support this view; and Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London, 1955), pp. 318-320, recognized the influence Symons may have had on his work.

⁶ As one might expect, Symons' most successful lyrics are those which derive not from his enthusiasm for other artists but those which grow directly out of his shaping of real life as he himself knew it.

that of his sources: the greater the achievement of the source, the greater the demands upon the borrower's creative skill. Beardsley's accomplishment, though restricted in scope, is a considerable one, and was a challenge to the poet.

The Beardsley designs influencing the "Studies in Strange Sins" were the brilliantly satiric drawings⁷ which appeared in the 1894 English version of Wilde's symbolist drama, *Salome*. Because of their heightened vitality, their original treatment of line and sensitively balanced masses of black and white, and their permeating satanism, these drawings gave critics the notion that Wilde's work had been used merely "to illustrate the illustrations."⁸ Symons admired Beardsley's designs for what he termed their "diabolic beauty"—their "consciousness of sin" and "abstract spiritual corruption" as "revealed in beautiful form."⁹ Beardsley's world, Symons went on to explain in a rococo prose, was "a world of phantoms where

the desire of the perfecting of mortal sensations, a desire of infinity, has overpassed mortal limits, and poised them, so faint, so quivering, so passionate for flight, in a hopeless and

⁷ The most provocative statement on this point by a contemporary of Beardsley was made by Yeats (*Autobiographies*, p. 333) who says that as the public response to Beardsley's work increased, and as Beardsley's tuberculosis became more ravaging, he grew "more and more violent in this satire, or created out of a spirit of mockery a form of beauty where his powerful logical intellect eliminated every outline that suggested meditation or even satisfied passion." Later critics have made similar readings: Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties* (London, 1950), p. 103, observes that the *Salome* drawings "seem to sneer at Oscar Wilde rather than interpret the play"; and Jerome H. Buckley, *The Victorian Temper* (Cambridge, 1951), p. 236, comments on the pronounced "satiric purpose" of the best of the drawings. Also see William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories*, I (New York, 1931), p. 136, and R. A. Walker, "Introduction," *Aubrey Beardsley's Salome: A Tragedy in One Act by Oscar Wilde* (London, 1957).

⁸ Hesketh Pearson, *Oscar Wilde: His Life and Wit* (New York, 1946), p. 204. Pearson suggests that Beardsley's treatment of Wilde in the drawings may be explained by the fact that Wilde turned down a translation of the play Beardsley had made, and instead accepted Lord Alfred Douglas' version, which he, Wilde, then doctored to such a degree that Douglas never claimed credit for his part. For a particularly incisive discussion of the indebtedness of Wilde's play to Maeterlinck's writing, see Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (New York, 1956), p. 298 and related note.

⁹ The professional relation between Symons as the editor of the *Savoy* and Beardsley as the illustrator of the magazine is well known; and Symons' critical study, *The Art of Aubrey Beardsley*, remains one of the finest appreciations and interpretations of the artist and his work.

strenuous immobility. They have the sensitiveness of the spirit, and that bodily sensitiveness which wastes their veins and imprisons them in the attitude of their luxurious meditation. They are too thoughtful to be ever really simple, or really absorbed by either flesh or spirit.¹⁰

He especially admired the aesthetic purity of those pieces that had little direct relation to the play, and in his prose interpretation of them showed a concern for still another art—music. In "The Black Cape," "Salome on Settee," and the "Toilette" drawings, Beardsley was "wholly concerned with creating decorative schemes as a musician might create impressions in sound as stirred in his imagination by the suggestion of the play."¹¹

Symons' "Studies," as we shall see, share in this spirit: in the sequence he selects from the impressions "stirred in his imagination" by the designs, he overlooks the pronounced sardonic elements in Beardsley, and emphasizes the more overtly "decadent" strain. In stressing the erotic and the demonic he was reflecting an interest popular in the nineties and one which he himself described in an involved fashion: an art of evil, he believed, "by its own intensity" may purify itself and become "intensely spiritual." Evil when "carried to the point of a perverse ecstasy, becomes a kind of good. Whenever a glimpse of perfect evil is obtained we are immediately recalled to the memory of good by the image of the beautiful with which evil is invested."¹²

¹⁰ *Studies in Seven Arts* (London, 1924), p. 99. Symons' notorious practice in successive prose editions of omitting passages from earlier editions, and of adding new ones either taken from other works or written for the occasion, necessitates my using two editions of his *Studies*.

¹¹ Quoted in Haldane McFall, *Aubrey Beardsley: The Man and His Work* (London, 1948), p. 49. Symons, in his *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, p. 47, also praised Verlaine's poems because they had gone, he felt, "as far as verse can go to become pure music," and because in them "the sense of hearing and the sense of sight are almost interchangeable." To explain Monticelli he noted in *Studies* the French painter's "voluptuous delight in daring harmonies of colour, as a musician might be content to weave dissonances into fantastic progressions, in a kind of very conscious madness, a Sadism of sound. . . . All his painting tends towards the effect of music, with almost the same endeavour to escape from the bondage of matter; which happens, however, to be the painter's proper material, while it is not the musician's" (*Seven Arts*, 1906, pp. 63-64). It is interesting that Wilde saw his play in musical terms. In "De Profundis" he says: "The refrains, whose recurring motifs make Salomé so like a piece of music, and bind it together as a ballad" (quoted by Robert Ross, "A Note on Salomé," preface to *Salomé* [New York, n.d.], p. 19). The sentence fragment is Wilde's.

¹² "Introduction," *The Art of Aubrey Beardsley*, p. 31.

He had in mind a theory of art, and a very modern-sounding one, which holds that any subject matter, no matter how grotesque, is appropriate to art; the supreme element is the "form," the special integrity which enables the perceiver to respond entirely to the resulting art work on its own terms, without reference to conventional notions of suitability.

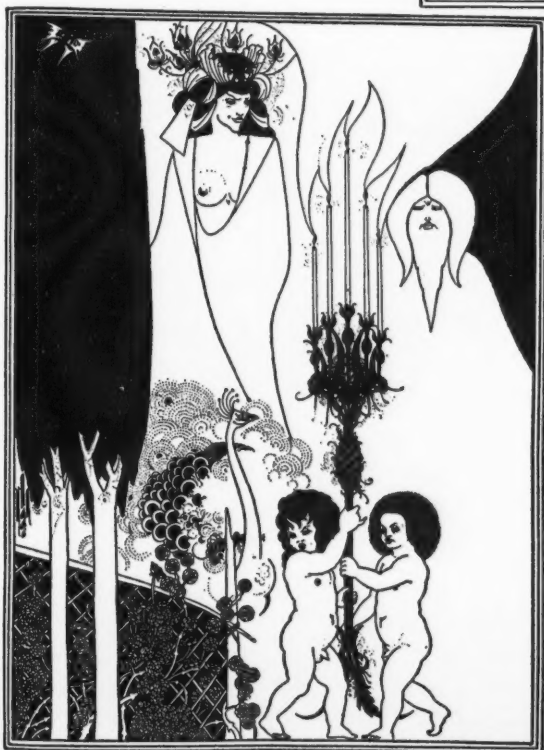
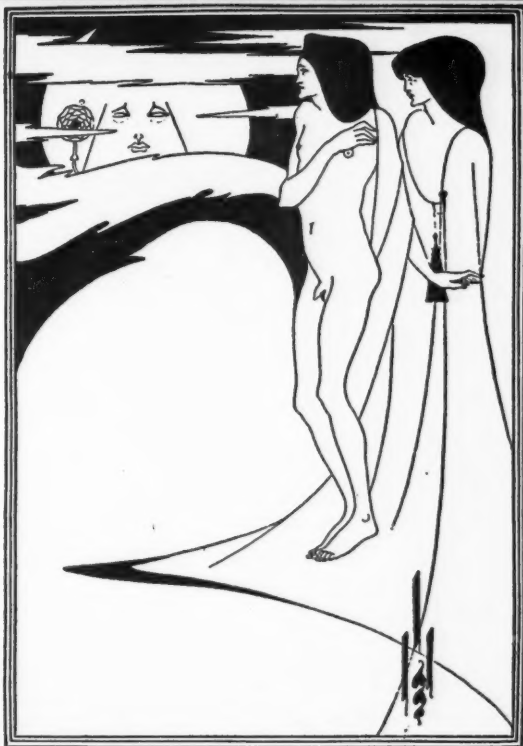
The conviction that evil is a legitimate domain for art was of course far from being new. In English and French literature alone, which would particularly concern Symons, the Lamia, Delores, Lilith, Cleopatra, and Salambo of Keats, Swinburne, Rossetti, Gautier, and Flaubert were an important inheritance; equally so were the highly diabolic arts of Felicien Rops, Constantin Guys, Toulouse Lautrec, and Gustave Moreau. Symons' own poems, "Lesbia: the Vampire," "Lamia," "Stella Maligna," "Bianca," and "Maquillage," among others, are attempts to wrest a positive beauty from symbols of degeneration, primarily sexual; and in his translations of Joris Karl Huysmans' pseudo-religious descriptions of Moreau's painting, which find clear echoes in "Studies in Strange Sins," Salome is "the symbolic deity of indestructible Lust, the goddess of immortal Hysteria, the accursed Beauty."¹³

2

For the "Studies in Strange Sins" Symons chose eight of the sixteen Beardsley Salome drawings, bypassing those like "The Black Cape," "Salome on Settee," and "The Peacock Skirt" which are scarcely concerned with the action of the play and serve primarily to display Beardsley's technical gifts. In spite of the poet's selectivity, however, the "Studies," while giving the impression of a unified work, has little more narrative unity than the disjointed Beardsley series of designs; it can claim at most a unity of tone (even this is broken in the third poem), and lacks anything like the controlling structure apparent in Rossetti's "House of Life," Tennyson's "In Memoriam," or Meredith's "Modern Love." For the most part, each poem of Symons demands a separate consideration in the way a painting or a drawing does, as if it has a wholeness quite distinct from the other works around it.

¹³ *Studies* (1906), pp. 75-76. Symons remarked (*Ibid.*, p. 76) that in *A Rebours* "the art of Moreau culminates, achieves itself, passes into literature." There is the further interesting complication of Wilde's having been inspired by Moreau. Frank Kermode, p. 74, says that "Wilde's *Salome* is Moreau's writ large. . . ." Also see Praz, pp. 291-295.

The Woman in the Moon



The Eyes of Herod



Danse du Ventre

The Dancer's Reward



Symons maintained Beardsley's order,¹⁴ his figures and objects, his spirit and tone, and his overall reading of Salome.

Beardsleian details of figures and setting appear everywhere. The first poem in the series, "The Woman in the Moon," maintains the amorphousness and the unadorned graphic quality of several of the designs. The choice of poetic objects is spare: a "boy" and a "girl" stand in "dishevelled seaweed" by "a nameless sea." Unfortunately Symons seemed to be more concerned with finding easy rhymes than artistically appropriate diction:

A naked youth adores the mocking Sun,
With a woman's sidelong eyes and lips,
Before unto the stormless Sea he dips.
The dark girl has the weariness of one
Who, after being satiated, is not won.

"John and Salome" has an equally pronounced visual concern and presents a close reading of Beardsley's illustration. The opening lines reflect the dominant blacks of the illustration (in keeping with the black and white of the designs, no other colors are mentioned) and the artist's positioning of his figures:

Black-haired and garbed in long black garments, John
With hand revulsed and eyes that ache with hate,
Equal in height with her, a dagger-thrust
Between them divides from him her raging lust.

"The Dancer's Reward," the final poem of the series, again stresses black, the dominant tone of the picture; and references to the "crescent" and the linear pattern of the Baptist's hair reveal the continuing visual interest:

cruelty
Glares in her eyes; her hand holds like a sword
One lock of dead black hair that angrily
Revolts as snakes do in their tangled lair.

Oh wind out of the south
Waft hellward that crescent on Salome's hair!

Despite Beardsley's simplified handling of the major visual masses, he often presented highly controlled but elaborate accoutrements of

¹⁴ He follows Beardsley so closely that he distorts the chronology of the action by placing "Salome's Lament," which comes last in time, third in the sequence.

dress and natural setting. One of the clearest examples of this is his "Design for the List of Pictures" which, in Symon's words, presents

Priapus, with his god's virility,
With woman's breasts that passionately rise,
His mouth convulsed with sinister irony,
His mouth that laughs, sinister as his eyes;
Hair wild and wanton, tipped with the ivory
Out of the moon's crescent out of sunless skies;
Garlands of leaves and roses furiously
Around his body in disorder twine;
The candlesticks emit a shaken flame.

It is obvious that in both the drawing and the poem elaborateness is used to intensify the erotic suggestion, and in this poem Symons almost succeeds in capturing the ornateness of his model.

The influence of spirit, or tone, is less pronounced than that of object and design since we are here concerned with literary interpretation. Because Symons chose to emphasize the eroticism he read into the illustrator's work he overlooks most of the sardonic humor, the love of witty paradox, and the several lampoons of Wilde. He ignores, for example, the fact that in Beardsley's "The Woman in the Moon," Wilde is the moon;¹⁵ that in "Salome's Lament" Wilde is a fragment of moon asleep above a ghoulish scene of a nude Salome leaning over the body of John and gripping his head between her hands; that in the Whistlerian "Eyes of Herod" Wilde stands white, plump, and long-haired, and peers through candleflame at a lascivious Salome; and that in "Enter Herodias" he is the showman-jester.

By contrast, Symons' readings lack most of the vitality of the satiric drawings. In the first poem the moon symbolizes pain caused Salome by vague, unfulfilled desire:

Sinister, alone,
The dishevelled seaweed shifts under their feet;
Upon the margin of the moonless sea
What shall the end be of their agony?
He to Salome: "It is the moon we see,
And not the Sun."

¹⁵ Beardsley is undoubtedly lampooning Wilde's treatment of the moon in his play. In the third speech of *Salome* the young Syrian says: The moon "is like a little princess . . . whose feet are of silver. She is like a princess who has little white doves for feet." The association of these attributes with Wilde, Beardsley's "Woman in the Moon," makes the satire particularly severe.

Salome is sinister, restless, and, we discover, the "daughter" of the moon. The "Eyes of Herod" is supposed to create tension for the impending dance of the seventh poem, but is little more than a sentimental elaboration of the Sin motif overlaid with a misty pseudo-Christian symbolism:

Her eyes have in them more than Satan's pride;
A little mouth that loves and hates and lies:
What Cross between the hollows of her Eyes
Brings back the Image of the Crucified?

In justice to Symons,¹⁶ however, we must agree with him that the "diabolic beauty," the "intense" wantonness, and the evil which Beardsley "lifted . . . into a region almost of asceticism"¹⁷ are clearly evident in the designs. In "For A List of Pictures," evil and perversity for their own sakes emerge clearly and set the tone for the entire series. Symons, giving an accurate transcription, accounts for the hermaphroditic nature of Beardsley's paradoxical Priapus (the conventional mythological deity of maleness) and makes reference to the "furiously" twining leaves and roses of the design, in which scores of intricately patterned blossoms envelop the design. In "John and Salome" Symons gives John the effeminate pose and the vestal virgin garb of the drawing. It is in "Enter Herodias," however, that we find Symons' most pronounced improvisation upon the artist's abnormal sexual theme.¹⁸ In this poem Symons accounts for the paradoxes he finds in the Beardsley drawing: the attendant's "sexless sex," Herodias as a woman, but not a woman; the hermaphrodite who makes its "Exit *onto* the stage," and the wise man in his owl-skin crown who is a dunce. The Queen and her attendants are truly Beardsleian grotesques: the bald dwarf, wearing a swollen harlequin's costume, has a repellent cancerous snout; the other attendant, clearly hermaphroditic and spotted with sores, has the hair, face and limbs of a girl and the torso of a boy; Herodias herself towers like a mountain of decay and corruption over the scene; and over his head the showman-jester

¹⁶ Symons concluded in his study of Beardsley that the latter was a satirist "almost against his own will."

¹⁷ Yeats (*Autobiographies*, p. 332) felt that Beardsley accomplished this by coming to see "the images of the mind in a kind of frozen passion, the virginity of the intellect."

¹⁸ It is curious that Symons almost completely ignores such ubiquitous Beardsley sexual trappings as candles, the Whistlerian peacock designs and butterflies, and the moths.

(Beardsley's Wilde) wears an owl-skin, the symbol of perverted wisdom, and gestures behind him towards the diseased Queen and her attendants.

Salome is, of course, the figure to dominate both the series. For Beardsley she is pretty clearly and consistently meant to be the incarnation of evil and lust. Symons, however, has his moments of ambivalent feeling about her, and while his usual interpretation parallels the artist's, his third poem, "Salome's Lament," represents a curious break in the graphic handling of the series. The "Lament" is a straight dramatic monologue in the Browning manner. Here, Salome is hardly the symbol of cruelty and demonism (*"la Beauté maudite,"* to quote Huysmans on Moreau) that she becomes in the succeeding poems. She has a conscience, though a weak one, and strives to explain her role in the beheading of John. She begins by blaming others. Herodias' "desire," she says, hinting at the mother's latent lesbianism,¹⁰ has been a factor:

And so I went
To Herodias in her chamber flushed with wine,
And she embraced me, passionate of my scent;
And said: "The head of John the Baptist, thine,
If thou but ask of Herod!"

A more significant factor, however, was the dance itself, which, she explains, Herod forced her to perform. Excited by the wine, by the inflammatory effects of the jewels touching her naked skin, and by the odors of her perfume, her understanding is dulled; and when she asks her incestuous father for the Baptist's head, she is incapable of comprehending the enormity of her request:

And I returned
And sat beside him and said: "I charge thee, King,
Thou givest me—" The heart within me burned,
My passionate heart, thinking of no such thing
As what Death is and life; I forgot my words,
Knowing that something said: "Yea, John must die!"

.
They gave me wine;
There was an universal hush of all men's breath!
What hour was it? I think it sounded nine.

¹⁰ Beardsley's grotesque treatment of Herodias makes her seem capable of almost any human perversity. In Wilde's play she is clearly a harlot of international repute, and her immediate reason for desiring John's death seems to be to test her cowardly husband and to combat his lust for Salome.

But in the next poem Salome loses her reflectiveness and becomes the stark embodiment of a cruel degrading lust. In a sense, she becomes a "design," an abstraction of a human being. Beardsleian details—the erotic eyes and the curious pendant, symbolic of hell—are included. In an attempt, however, to heighten her symbolic meaning through an efflorescent, nervous diction, Symons unfortunately approaches the ludicrous:

Lust in her naked breasts that have two eyes,
 Lust in her flesh, the flesh he looks upon,
 Lust that makes her whole body undulate,
 Lust on her lips; the lust that never dies,
 Between the hollow of her breasts, a sign
 Sinister of that hell that lives within
 Her limbs that long for him, her mouth like wine,
 Wine that she gives to spirits more malign
 Than hers.

The longest poem wholly devoted to Salome, and the key one of the group, is "VII: Danse du Ventre." In addition to its connections with Beardsley's work, it reflects Symons' interest in Gustave Moreau and his enthusiasm for the dance as the purest of the art forms.²⁰ "Danse du Ventre," which contains both passages of merit and others of an embarrassing self-consciousness, is an experiment in varied motion. The brief lines, the quick variations between monosyllabic and polysyllabic words, the repetitions of sibilants and words suggesting the sound of string music, the highly varied masculine and feminine endings, and the plethora of run-on lines help to convey the feverish sensuality of Salome's whirling dance:

the soul
 Cries with her discontent;
 Swathed in her Orient scent,
 Her soul endures the whole
 Of her heart's discontent.
 Her limbs insatiable

²⁰ Symons, who saw the dance as "a kind of arrested music" and "as simply a picture in motion," worked at this type of poem with surprising skill; and it is here, perhaps, in the area of verse movement that he made a significant contribution to English poetry. Such poems include the "Andante of Snakes," "To a Gitana Dancing," "The Armenian Dancer," "The Turning Dervish," and "Javanese Dancers." The last poem is, I think, not only the best of this group but one of the few fine poems Symons produced.

Dance to the music's strings,
 A dwarf arisen from hell
 Plays on: such evil things
 Draw the nerves out of strings.

. . . she turns and turns
 On herself furiously;
 A fire within her burns
 Her flesh inordinately;
 Desire within her burns
 The flesh over her bones:
 She on herself returns
 As all her precious stones
 Shake, flame, among her zones,
 Her desires drown the night
 In the body's appetite.
 Her sense before her swims,
 Her feet scarce touch the ground,
 The rhythm of her limbs
 As a lost star bedims
 The sense of hollow sound
 In the dull music drowned.
 Rigid her eyes as death,
 Rigid her ivory chin,
 She swoons upon her breath,
 She swoons upon her Sin.
 And still her body moves,
 And roses fall around;
 In the eyes of Herod, loves
 Turn hates, and his rings ring
 Upon his fingers thin.

The visual details derive not only from Beardsley, but from Huysmans' appreciations of Moreau which Symons translated and interpreted. Beardsley's dwarf musician appears, and the arabesqued trappings of roses and veils—the frozen motion Symons spoke of, represented by the falling lines of the rosettes, by the quick abstract whirls of Salome's veils, and by the lines of the white crescents. Moreau's "flames, flowers, and blood" are obvious; and the "ivory-toned" quality of the dancer's flesh, noted by Huysmans, her elaborate jewels which "burst" into flame, and the "splendid insects," all find direct echo in Symons' lines.²¹

²¹ "Gustave Moreau," *Studies in Seven Arts* (1906), pp. 74-75.

The final poem, "The Dancer's Reward,"²² in spite of the starkness of Salome's emotion as she grips the severed head, comes as a relief to the frenzy of the dance section, and provides the tone for an appropriate close. Salome remains the image of unredeemed evil.

3

While Symons' natural talent may have been impressive, his poetic accomplishment, we must conclude, was not: he is rarely able to subordinate his borrowings to a controlled personal statement or to inform his raw material with a superior artistic wisdom. We remain far too conscious of the Beardsleian trappings; and though Symons' metrical ability is often competent, he is seldom able to give his language the accents of inevitability and truth.

He did acquire from Beardsley, however, more sharply realized symbols than he might otherwise have evolved; a subject matter which enabled him as representative of "the mauve decade" to explore more fully the nature of a specialized "sin"—a topic of primary concern to the decadents; and an implementation for his view, one he shared with other modernists of his day, that the arts are appropriate stimuli for each other and can provide material as suitable for shaping by a creative imagination as the untried matter of life itself. His failure certainly points up his own limitations as an artist; more importantly, however, it underscores the immense requirement of craft which the creative act demands of the would-be creator—a requirement measurably heightened if the source of inspiration and experience is not life but art. Perhaps a poet with the skill and wisdom of Yeats or Stevens was required to bring the often flagrantly inverted discoveries and experiments of Symons and his contemporaries to real aesthetic fruition.

²² Yeats reports (*Autobiographies*, p. 333) that he once told Beardsley: "You have never done anything to equal your Salomé with the head of John the Baptist."

*Reflexive Attitudes:
Sterne, Gogol, Gide*

All art, of course, envisages reality: any work of art is, among other things, an intuitive statement about our experience of the world. And any work of art, at the same time, interests itself in appearance; first in the sort of appearance to be found in the "sheen" of things, the way they appear; second in its own appearance, the artifice it constitutes of paint or sound or words organized.

The novel generally puts social appearance and reality, as well as the fine process through which both change or interchange, at the center of a given theme. The novel, to begin with, because of its mere length, stands closer (makes an appearance of pretense to stand closer) to actuality than other genres just by going along at a slower pace even than epic and moving through minutiae. The problem the novelist faces then, of inventing a coherent artifice, an appearance, is bewildering just because of the mass of detail or experience he must contemplate. This condition of the genre sometimes gets worked into the tone of the writing. Cervantes, and many another novelist, refers ironically to the appearance of his own novel, the artifice which it must perforce be, as selected and, hence, in one sense distant from reality. Fielding, to a lesser extent Thackeray, Trollope occasionally, speak of their make-believe as a make-believe. This artifice is in the initial conception of *Tristram Shandy*, *Dead Souls*, *Les Faux Monnayeurs*, as well as *Don Quixote*; and it is implicit in the formalism of most well-made novels since Flaubert.

We shall call this artifice reflexivity, partly by analogy to the reflexive voice of an inflected verb. Partly, too, this term may serve

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to indicate something of the introspective character in the inner lives that go on in novels; introspection is reflexive in being reflective: it *considers itself*. One captivated by this fact might find an obscure connection suggested in noting that the modern language most fertile in reflexive verbs is the language in which the most formal novels are written, including the most thoroughly reflexive novel of all, *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu*.

Reflexivity, like any literary device, does not or should not operate in a void; artifices would be vain if they could be purely artificial; they cannot because they must in some way designate the reality from which they spring. When a novel uses reflexivity it must discover a reality. Otherwise we feel it to be gratuitously artificial: *Euphues* seems more artificial than *Don Quixote* because it embodies a reality less deep, though actually the reflexivity of Lyly's proto-novel is far simpler than Cervantes'.

As a sequence of words, as a narrative of successive events, the novel is subject to time as a formal condition; in this its artifice resembles the reality of life even more than do less expansively temporal genres, and the similarity has often been exploited. Sterne's reflexivity about the time of his narrative reveals some of the tenuousness of living time. In *Tristram Shandy* the improvisatory tone of "I'm making it up as I go along" allows a meandering narrative which can constantly interrupt itself to give Rabelaisian catalogs, introduce diverse details and characters, inject a capriccio into the rhythm, and have its characters philosophize on all manner of contingent subjects. Uncle Toby and Walter Shandy discuss the relation of time and eternity to the reflexively pretended wonderment of the narrator. He, too, speculates on the difference between the time of reading the narrative and the time of the events of the narrative, ironically playing fast and loose with the fact that in his seemingly topsy-turvy book world of artifice reading takes longer than doing. In *Tom Jones* Fielding expresses the relative difference between duration and clock time by disquisitions on the subject and by its book headings ("Containing Twelve Hours," "Containing Three Days," etc.). Centralizing Fielding's point, that moments of stress slow the clock, Sterne pits the dullness of the clock against the infinite fits and starts of an odd fictive world.

Through his reflexivity toward time Sterne is able to express the essence of his unique humor; this, in Coleridge's definition (cited by Dorothy Van Ghent in *The English Novel*), is "a certain reference

to the general and the universal, by which the finite great is brought into identity with the little, or the little with the finite great, so as to make both nothing in comparison with the infinite." Reflexivity is an irony toward one's self as narrator. In Sterne, to apply Coleridge's summation, the presence of infinity implied by the narrator's constantly asserted freedom to go into ever greater details, or to digress, ironically qualifies the nature of the finite, revealing it as capricious, irregular, half melancholy, shoring up pitiable but lovable ideas and quirks to weather out its fond and foolish existence.

The associative laws of the Shandean universe are quite different from those of Locke, which they satirize as a part of the irony. By a principle of distortion comparable to that in *Gulliver's Travels*, Sterne envisions the nature of sentiments: instead of altering the size of the people he distorts their psyches from inside out by deflecting the conjunctions of fancy from incongruity to congruity; if incongruous in the appearances of time, congruous in the reality of an imagined eternity. The reflexivity toward time helps underscore the temporal arbitrariness, and thereby the spirituality, of the conjunctions. "Digressions," Sterne says, "incontestably are the sunshine;—they are the life, the soul of reading!—Take them out of this book, for instance,—you might as well take the book along with them."

As *Tristram Shandy's* time-play is essential to its fancy, its fancy is at once a chief meaning and a chief mode of characterization. Eschewing the other descriptive methods he enumerates, Sterne declares, "I will draw my Uncle Toby's character from his Hobby-Horse." Uncle Toby, Walter Shandy, his wife, Obadiah, Slop, Yorick are helpless before the infinite because they are fanciful; Uncle Toby's impotence and his Hobby Horse of reconstructing the siege of Namur equally reveal his dependence on the warping past (he was actually wounded in the groin). What the structural irony does, as Dorothy Van Ghent indicates, is keep "the sentimental and the emotional and the pathetic in the same human world with the obscene and the trivial and the absurd." Impotence leads to love: Uncle Toby feels pity for the fly he releases from his hand, the most impressive event of the narrator's boyhood, because of his wound, perhaps; and the Widow Wadman's amorous interest arises from a pleasurable commingling of curiosity and pity in her impressionable breast.

For the clergyman Sterne, as for Montaigne and Cervantes, the soul is infinite, too evanescent in the reality of its appearances, too fictive, for such coarse meshes as the theological categories of Latin theo-

logians, the chief butt of satire in the novel. And because man in this life has intimations of immortality, the body is the mansion of the soul, and noses and whiskers are windows on a secret life:

—There is, continued my father, a certain mien and motion of the body and all its parts, both in acting and speaking, which argues a man well within; and I am not at all surprised that Gregory of Nazianzum, upon observing the hasty and untoward gestures of Julian, should foretell he would one day become an apostate;—or that St. Ambrose should turn his Amenuensis out of doors, because of an indecent motion of his head, which went backwards and forwards like a flail;—or that Democritus should conceive Protagoras to be a scholar, from seeing him bind up a faggot, and thrusting, as he did it, the small twigs inwards.—There are a thousand unnoticed openings, continued my father, which let a penetrating eye at once into a man's soul; and I maintain it, added he, that a man of sense does not lay down his hat in coming into a room,—or take it up in going out of it, but something escapes, which discovers him.

(The whole of modern fiction uses narrative detail in accordance with this principle.)

Uncle Toby's concupiscence is as odd and archaic as the siege of Namur; which, according to the principle held in this passage, may be why he lost his manhood there. The force of love dominates him, in all its nervous imperiousness, as it does his brother and his sister-in-law. Love is an oblique angle that best illuminates him, as birth and a "sentimental" trip to France where he reacts to the pathos of love best highlight Tristram. The novel's theme turns on that principle which incarnates the sentiments' appearances into bodily reality, bringing new people into this soulful world. Love, as Freud was later to discover, picks up like a ball of tar all the oddments of this life. Sterne expresses the immortal strangeness of this ball of tar by amusedly describing the mortal oddments it has picked up.

No love, no incarnation. Names are significant, Walter Shandy urges, and his son, who was to be called Trismegistus, got the name Tristram through the all too human bungling of a chambermaid "with a memory like unto a sieve." Human contingencies turned him who was to be Trismegistus—an arch permuter of hermetic correspondences which suggest those of *Tristram Shandy* without the love—into Tristramgistus, a knight of love who learns the gist of life in the process of living. The dependencies of love are a thralldom no

one can escape, down to their very errors. "The original of society," Walter Shandy says, "I'm satisfied is, what Politian tells us, *i. e.*, merely conjugal; and nothing more than the getting together of one man and one woman."

Love occasions the delicate feelings observed by a mature Tristram in France; love makes this lopsided Shandean world go round, and love properly occupies the center of the novel, which begins with the conception of Tristram and ends with the courtship of Uncle Toby. All the relationships in the novel are occasioned by blood ties, amorous attraction, or attendantcy on the birth of Tristram; and the parturient consequences of love bring Dr. Slop and the midwife, Yorick and Susannah and Obadiah, into the narrative.

The very time of the narrative in its congruous incongruities rises out of love. So Sterne declares that he will tell his story, "as Horace said," (actually contrary to Horace's dicta) *ab ovo*, from the egg; and this particular egg, the homunculus, is fancied weak and melancholy, Shandean that is, because one of the haphazard congruities in time, the connection of winding a clock with the act of love, has been interrupted. The sense of life must evolve in a process as circuitous as the wobbly lines drawn by Sterne to illustrate the course of his narrative. "I am not obliged to set out with a definition of what love is," he says. "And so long as I can go on with my story intelligibly, with the help of the word itself, without any other idea to it, than what I have in common with the rest of the world, why should I differ from it a moment before the time?—When I can get on no further,—and find myself entangled on all sides of this mystic labyrinth,—my opinion will then come in, in course,—and lead me out." The last statement is ironic, for according to the novel's epigraph—

Ταράσσει τοὺς Ἀνθρώπους οὐ τὰ Πράγματα
Ἀλλὰ τὰ περὶ τῶν Πραγμάτων Δόγματα—

it is not facts (realities) which disrupt mankind but opinions about facts (surmises on appearances); and, in this novel which deals with opinion only to satirize it, the "mystic labyrinth" of life is embodied in the facts themselves of love's incongruous progressions.

Modesty is a necessary and revelatory incongruity, an indestructible absurdity which somehow keeps the physical fact of love in its proper place; this place may seem improper to prudery, as life's mystery seems incongruous to mortal, unimaginative eyes. The Widow Wadman blushes, but she must have Uncle Toby's manhood con-

firmed, and fame spreads the report through all the parish as to "what were the secret articles which had delayed the surrender."

The narrative in its reflexive caprice is divergent to the last. We end not with the implied, expected wedding of Uncle Toby but with the impotence of Walter Shandy's stud bull. Walter Shandy is just getting under way, and bogging down, in an endless anecdote about the bull when Mrs. Shandy says, "L-d! . . . what is all this story about?—A Cock and a Bull, said Yorick—And one of the best of its kind, I ever heard." The fiction ends by reflexively calling itself a make-believe cock-and-bull in a digressive anticlimax: this points up, like all else, the evanescent reality of love under its temporal appearances. Such a meaning is fictive in its very tentativeness and indirection; in its own peculiar way it demonstrates the queer reality of appearance by reflexively calling itself an artifice at every step.

Gogol uses a different kind of reflexivity for an appropriately different end. His most characteristically reflexive device, which Dorothy Van Ghent notes too in Sterne, is his use of the expanding metaphor. He plays with the vehicle of the metaphor so reflexively that it becomes a little world in itself, changing to the tenor before our very eyes till it collapses back again into its real character as a trope of language. "The peripheral characters of his novel," Nabokov (Nikolai Gogol) says, "are engendered by the subordinate clauses of its various metaphors, comparisons and lyrical outbursts. We are faced by the remarkable phenomenon of mere forms of speech directly giving rise to live creatures." A world pullulates into being before Chichikov's, and our, eyes as he arrives at the governor's party:

Upon entering the main hall Chichikov was compelled to narrow his eyes for a minute or so, since the brilliance of the candles and lamps and the ladies' gowns was terrific. Everything was flooded with light. Everywhere one looked black frock coats flitted and darted by, singly and in clusters, as flies dart over a white, gleaming loaf of refined sugar in the summer season, on a sultry July day, as an aged housekeeper standing at an open window cleaves and divides the loaf into glittering, irregular lumps: all the children, having flocked together, are looking on, curiously watching the movements of her roughened hands as they lift up the maul, while the aerial squadrons of flies, held up by the bouyant air, fly in boldly, as if they owned the whole place and, taking advantage of the crone's purblindness and of the sun that bothers

her eyes, bestrew the dainty morsels, in some places singly, in others in thick clusters.

Here the flies, a mere comparison, come into a life of their own, like the dead souls whose exchange gives the plot its main line. Appended to them, as the owners to the dead souls, are a housekeeper out of nowhere and even some gawking children ("second generation now!" Nabokov comments).

In the playfully significant names he gives his characters too, Gogol is reflexive, and in his occasional author's asides throughout. Reflexive, as well, perhaps, is his cavalierness with the plot. Where Sterne flouts Horace by commencing *ab ovo*, Gogol plunges so protractedly, so playfully, *in medias res* that we are within a third of the end before we know Chichikov's origins and purpose. What remains a mystery for so long is why he wants to buy the dead souls, the deceased serfs, who will retain a fictive life till the next census in the government audits. The reason for buying them is deliberately left in obscurity, because, in the mere legal fiction of their existence, they constitute the central reflexivity of the plot: it is so fictive as to be about nothing, as the gallows humor Gogol continually extracts from the situation keeps reminding us. "'After all, what sort of a parable is this, really,'" ask the townspeople, in a nameless fictive town of N—— which is on the road to the real cities of Moscow and Kazan. 'What sort of a parable are these dead souls? There's no logic to dead souls; how, then, can one buy up dead souls? Where would you ever dig up a fool big enough to buy them? And what sort of fairy gold would he use to buy them? And to what end, for what business, could one utilize these dead souls? . . . All this is simply the Devil riding on a fiddlestick, so much moonshine, stuff and nonsense, pigeon milk and horse feathers!'"

"'And how on earth has the governor's daughter gotten mixed up in here,' they wonder." What has attracted the governor's daughter is the same confidence fraud to which the prospective sellers give such varying, such fictive value. The fraud, the pivotal situation of the plot, turns this world inside out, as do the expanding metaphors, to show the estates of the town in all their elusive, swarming concreteness. Their owners in all their individuated roundness change before our very eyes, like the metaphors, as Chichikov makes them his fictive proposition. The nothingness of the dead souls measures and qualifies them, and they fall into sharp relief by the varying manners Chichikov uses to make the identical proposal to each, by the worlds of differ-

ences among their households, above all by their responses. Since souls have no value, each betrays the secret constellations of his psyche by his reaction to this fiction. The generous, modest, anxious Manilov, at first so shocked and deferential toward the dead that he cannot understand the request, gives them gladly, even paying for the title deeds, while the fussy widow Korobochka, with her clumsy slyness, bargains Chichikov up to fifteen rubles for the lot and tries to sell him honey, grain, and feathers into the bargain. Nozdrev, deceptively comradely under a ruthless mask of generosity, insists on gambling for the souls, cheats at checkers, and is about to order his bullies to thrash Chichikov when a police officer arrives to arrest him for a similar incident. Where the tough, suave Sobakevitch anticipates the proposal and exacts the highest price, two and a half rubles a head, Plushkin, whom he has maligned as a miser, rubs his hands with glee at the opportunity to dump the "dead weight" from his tax rolls. They are individuated as well, later, in their reactions to the police inspector's investigation of Chichikov's activities; Korobochka imperceptively tells all, Sobakevitch takes Machiavellian umbrage and goes on vacation, etc. Their lists are as different as the compilers:

Every one of these memoranda seemed to have some sort of character of its own, and because of this, it seemed as if the muzhiks themselves took on their own characters. The muzhiks belonging to Korobochka had, almost to a man, supplemental qualifications and nicknames. Plushkin's memorandum was distinguished by its conciseness of phrase: frequently only the first syllables of his dead serf's first names and patronymics would be written down, followed by two dots. Sobakevitch's list struck one by its unusual fullness and particularization: not one of the muzhiks' qualities had been passed over; of one it was said: *a good Joiner*; another had a notation opposite his name: *Knows his Work and doesn't touch spirits*. . . . "And what muzhik is this? Elizavet' the Sparrow! Hell and damnation and the bottomless pit—a wench! How did she ever get shuffled in here? That Sobakevitch is a scoundrel; even in such a thing he had to take me in!"

Why Chichikov wants only male serfs is deliberately left obscure, like much else. Perhaps because men are stronger and handier than women; but these are all dead! In these deliberate obscurities, as in its central situation, *Dead Souls* resembles Melville's *The Confidence Man*. What makes Gogol's book weirder, is the playful reflexivity of

his metaphors and style, and the related partial reflexivity of his central situation.

Gogol burned the rest of what he had finished of his novel in a fit of touchingly fanatic zeal. In a sense, though, it could go on indefinitely: the central conception could make it theoretically interminable. In Part II Chichikov slows down in a way reminiscent of the perpetual slowing down in *Tristram Shandy*. He buys an estate and settles for a long moment. Chichikov's plot, by the very fact of its being an endless repetition with variation, has no design; it is all process. The lightness of the reflexivity, in its improvisatory tone, allows Gogol to shift it at will from the dead souls' confidence tour to life on a purchased estate, then to prison where Chichikov has been sent for forging a will. History has made it conclude, if fittingly, only tentatively, on the prince's unfinished panegyric of Russia, ironic in Gogol's context, though not in the mouth of the prince. A perhaps endless fictive world has been stopped in process; but its character has been generated by a reflexivity of metaphor and plot, a world as different in its weirdness from the preternaturally cluttered one of *Tristram Shandy* as Gogol's use of reflexivity differed from that of the author he admired.

In *Les Faux Monnayeurs* Gide injects a functionless reflexivity that mars what is otherwise his best novel. For his chief observer, Edouard, to be writing the same novel has no relation other than a wilfully stated one to the imaginative center of Gide's novel. For the rest, *Les Faux Monnayeurs* is an excellently plotted fiction which explores the psychological genesis of moral falsity in the illegitimacy of Bernard and Boris; the adulterate pregnancy of Laura; the self-destructiveness of Vincent and Lady Griffiths; the literary adventurism of Olivier, Edouard, and the Comte de Passavant. The moral lives of all these people and others are acutely presented through incisive incident and portraiture, and the counterfeit money serves neatly, if somewhat factitiously, dramatically as a ficelle binding them together and pictorially as a metaphor for moral falseness.

But counterfeiting, literal and figurative, calls for reflexivity in a novel only by a logical trick. Even the appearance of an angel at a moment of Bernard's contrition, miraculously achieving his conversion from the falseness of his past, seems validly expressive of the moral life of the novel, and therefore legitimately borrowed from Dostoevsky (its counterpart being Ivan Karamazov's discourse with the devil). What, after the very extremism of Bernard's lying past, could the

miracle of contrition conjure up in sufficiently strong opposition to it but an angel? Bernard's decision almost demands one. Yet to have the monstrously jejune speculations of Edouard's journal follow on the horror of Boris' suicide is to cap a realized fictive finality with a bungling anticlimax.

E. M. Forster's critical discernment (*Aspects of the Novel*) has guided us in separating the good from the bad in Gide's novel. But his reason is the wrong one: "It is like trying to lay an egg and being told you have produced a paraboloid—more curious than gratifying. And what results when you try to lay a paraboloid, I cannot conceive—perhaps the death of the hen. That seems the danger in Gide's position—he sets out to lay a paraboloid." What ails Gide's novel is not that it uses reflexivity, a legitimate and indeed, as we have been saying, a radically fictive device, but that it fails to use it imaginatively. The feeling of fate Gide achieves now and then by brusque transitions to the third person of an over-seeing author, lending a piquancy to the style, needs not such *pastiche* Pirandello mechanisms. For Gide's theme was not Pirandello's infinitely self-reflecting mirrors, though he declared it to be, but the analysis of a kind of moral evil. It deals with Mme. Sophroniska's "questions de psychologie et à ce qui peut éclairer d'un jour nouveau l'âme humaine," and not with Edouard's grandiose "lutte entre les faits proposés par la réalité et la réalité idéale," or his "rivalité du monde réel et de la représentation que nous nous en faisons."

Reflexivity is a precarious device just because it relates so radically to the nature of fiction. Gide struggled overambitiously to turn his sharp minor moralist's gift into the equipment of a major novelist, but it takes a Sterne or a Gogol to present a world of fiction with breadth and temper sweeping enough to include a reflexivity beyond the scope of *Paludes*, the acute *jeu d'esprit* in which Gide fictionalizes on a smaller scale the problems of the novelist.

Gide, who calls *Les Faux Monnayeurs* his first novel, had at least the good sense to confine himself to the *récit* till he could take on a more ambitious, and as it turned out, slightly too ambitious, form. Yet never in his career as a writer does he stop floundering to add the impossible cubit to his stature; he goes from the calculated limitations of a journal like the Goncourts' to the magic of myth in *Thésée*. The last, to be sure, matches the modest success of *L'Ecole des Femmes*, *Les Nourritures Terrestres*, and others in a different form, and it is to Gide's credit that in the overblown partial failure, *Les Faux Monnayeurs*, he can surpass his smaller works.

If Gide is imperfect, he is to the extent of his imperfection amateur rather than professional, and there is an irony of history in the fact that as an editor he rejected impulsively, almost compulsively, on the grounds of amateurism, the manuscript of the most thoroughly professional novelist of his, perhaps of any, literary generation.

There is a further irony that Proust could, as Gide could not, put reflexivity to consummate imaginative use. The boy Marcel in Proust's novel lives through his whole life up to the point where time is rediscovered, when, as a mature man, his life recapitulates itself into meaning: he finds, just as he is despairing, that it is his destiny to write a novel, within the fiction reflexively identical with the one we have been reading. The identity of Marcel (I of the narrator) converges at the end with the identity of Proust (I of the author). The book is about the man who is writing the book about the man who is writing the book . . . With this double I, as Martin-Chauffier calls it, the ambiguity of imagination-reality is made unresolvable. This reflexive device permits time to be rediscovered; it is precisely the recapitulating backward reflections of the quasi-Bergsonian duration in time which give the young Marcel's experiences from *Du Cote de chez Swann* forward such an imaginative depth.

For Proust, reflexivity becomes thematic first through perspective; for Sterne through narrative time; for Gogol through plot and metaphor. These uses of reflexivity, as well as the equally distinct ones of Cervantes, Fielding, and others, while they are as unique as the novels in which they occur, have in common a revelation of a sense about events germane to fiction in general. A make-believe sequence of happenings that ring true calls itself make-believe so as to call into play felt qualities of both appearance and reality.

The Winter Landscape in the History of Art

The following remarks do not intend to accord equal treatment to the image of winter as it developed in Western poetry, painting and music;¹ nor do they primarily aim at showing how sociological facts are mirrored in the various arts. They are no more than cursory reflections upon an inexhaustible subject, put down by an historian of the visual arts who is also interested in literature and music and who believes that the history of painting, in addition to being a history of pictorial forms as such, affords some significant insights into the history of human thought and human society.

It almost seems to require a special effort on our part to realize that the painting of winter landscapes is but a very recent chapter in the history of Western art, strictly speaking one that barely covers four centuries. Those who remember early literary evocations of winter—Xenophon's military report, Horace's Soracte "alta nive candidum," some medieval poems, the Good Friday forest in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parsifal*, the icy regions of Dante's Hell—may expect that painting kept step with the writers of those times. They will find next to nothing. And if we think of winter landscape painting in terms of the painting of independent panels or canvases representing nature at winter time we soon come to realize that the painting of *any* landscapes of this sort is of very recent origin. Finally, if we think of winter landscapes—and again, for that matter, of any landscapes—as "slices of nature," with no other major interest than the rendering of

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¹ Practically no literature on the subject exists, not even a picture book, except on small sections of the material. For the literary aspects I refer the reader to *A Winter Miscellany*, ed. and compiled by Humbert Wolfe (London, 1930), and *A Book of the Winter*, compiled by Edith Sitwell (New York, 1951).

nature for nature's sake, their history is even shorter than the four centuries mentioned before. It was not until the early decades of the seventeenth century that such works were done, and even then human figures were never wholly omitted from them; in order to find a winter landscape entirely "left to itself" we have to advance as far as the romantic period of the nineteenth century. But the forerunners of that mature phase are far from being negligible or dull.

It comes as no surprise to anyone familiar with medieval thought that the two main sources of European winter landscape painting turn out to lie in the realms of allegory and of the Bible. In the former, the medieval concept of the "Labors of the Months" is most important. Human life, invariably seen *sub specie aeternitatis*, was subdivided not only into ranks and professions but also according to its typical occupations as dictated by the seasons and the months of the average year. A well-established pictorial tradition of the concept developed in countless medieval manuscripts which were provided with calendars, as well as in sculptured reliefs incorporated in those incomparable pictorial encyclopedias of medieval thought, the façades of the great cathedrals. *January* appears typically characterized as a feast in celebration of the New Year, and, more significantly, *February*, as an old man warming himself at the fire. As these representations were enriched with observations culled from the artist's own surroundings—a process lasting throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and of particular prominence in the calendars of illuminated manuscripts—the appearance of the first winter landscapes was being prepared step for step. And yet, we still marvel at the astounding precocity of the *February* (Fig. 1) as depicted by one of the painter-brothers Limburg in the Book of Hours now in Chantilly, illuminated in the years after 1413 for that insatiable art patron and bibliophile, Jean Duc de Berry, brother to the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy. The traditional motif of "warming oneself at the fire" is still there (and observed with a superb sense of humor); and even outdoors, man and his occupation are not slighted: the shepherd shivering as he guards his flock huddled under the shed, the man cutting trees, the peasant taking his mule to the village are significant enough; but the glory of this, as of other illuminations for this calendar, is the new and immediately convincing representation of nature itself, of the landscape stretching out into the distance under the wintry sky, the snow-covered trees and roofs, the feeling for wide spaces and genuine atmospheric effects. That this is not an entirely unique case of anticipation of

modern winter landscape at the beginning of the fifteenth century—a time of great discoveries in painting that have hardly any parallel in the whole history of art—can be demonstrated with a few more book illuminations (including one depicting an actual snowfall) and a few works in other media such as the *January* fresco in the Torre dell' Aquila in Trent with its lively rendering of a snowball fight and a hunter trudging through the snow-covered landscape. But these, too, are rather exceptional, and the Chantilly *February* remains in any case the supreme example.

Important though the realm of allegory was for the medieval painter the area of religious subjects properly speaking was of course even more significant. And winter does come in here. After all, the birth of Christ occurred at winter time and so did the stories immediately connected with this central theme of Christianity. The painters did not overlook this fact; but it took them an astonishingly long time to become fully aware of its pictorial possibilities.

The iconography of the *Nativity of Christ* has its surprises, and one of them is precisely the considerable resistance encountered by winter in entering it. In a famous panel by Fra Filippo Lippi painted toward 1460 the ground is full of flowers and the trees full of foliage—by no means a rare occurrence. Evidently we are here in spring time since it is quite clear that the painter was sufficiently interested in nature to give us more than just a neutral foil and a bare ground as a stage setting. The answer to this enigma is a theological one. The birth of Christ was too joyous an event to be linked with dead, cold winter; this is the spring time of man's hope and God's promise, and the Mary of the Nativity "is the flower";

Sprung is the mirthful May
Which Winter cannot mar,

as Edmund Bolton was to sing even a century later. By the same token, this was not a scene of darkness but of light: the notion that on that days of days, the sun rose an hour earlier is a very old and venerable one. It took a more modern—or should we say, more sentimental?—attitude to think of the poor baby in the cold and darkness and of his shivering, distraught parents, or, as Milton was to put it later:

It was no season then for her [nature]
To wanton with the sun, her lusty paramour.

Only a few examples of the fifteenth century tend in this direction. Robert Campin (*Nativity* in Dijon) has no snow but at least some bare

trees; on the other hand, the premature sunrise is still indicated, making the candle in Joseph's hand appear useless. Bare trees *and* nightfall occur in Gentile da Fabriano's great Uffizi predella of 1423. What was right in connection with the *Nativity* was no less correct for the *Flight into Egypt* and the *Journey of the Magi* (as in Sassetta's famous painting in New York).

We certainly cannot blame the Italians, of all people, for admitting snow into their pictures only by way of a miraculous tale such as the one connected with the founding of the great basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. In the fourth century Pope Liberius and a venerable old couple of Roman citizens had been told in a vision that the new church they intended to build for the greater glory of Mary should be erected on a lot of the Esquiline Hill (in fact, on a clearly marked groundplan) indicated by freshly fallen snow. Thus Santa Maria della Neve—as the church is also called precisely because of this origin—came into being, and this legend was repeatedly represented by Italian artists including Masolino and Sassetta (in the early fifteenth century). But the most beautiful rendering of this miracle came from the brush of the great German master Matthis Gothard-Neithard, better known by his mistaken name of Matthias Grünewald; painted in the early sixteenth century, it makes of this old legend an exciting drama, in which the depiction of an actual snowfall plays a less startling part than does the penetrating characterization of the wintry atmosphere in which a plethora of wonderful reds burn like fanals in the night.

Only a few minor Northern masters of the middle and late fifteenth century introduced snow in representations of the *Nativity*, and there seems to be a complete lack of such cases precisely at the time in which landscape painting in general was beginning to come into its own, namely around 1500-1525. I have no explanation for the fact that artists like Albrecht Altdorfer, otherwise a key figure in the history of landscape painting, or Joachim Patenier, the first Netherlandish landscape specialist, or even Albrecht Dürer himself should not have been sufficiently fascinated by a snow-covered vista to put it down with the pen or the brush.

And then, with a suddenness reminiscent of the situation in the beginning of the preceding century, we have the incomparable masterpieces of winter landscape painting from the hand of Pieter Bruegel the Elder in the 1560's. But it must be noted that almost all of Bruegel's winter landscapes are still closely connected with the medieval tradition and by no means winter landscapes in the modern sense, i. e., "slices

of nature" at winter time. Moreover, they are connected with exactly the same two realms we found to be of central importance in the earlier works: the Bible and the "Labors of the Months." From the Bible, he chose, not the Nativity but the *Adoration of the Magi*, the *Census of Bethlehem* and the *Slaughter of the Innocents*, all of them closely linked to the Christmas night in terms of chronology and season; and here we would surely be wrong to consider the biblical story as nothing more than an "excuse" for painting a winter landscape. The forbidding atmosphere in the tragedy overtaking the firstborn and their parents, in which the emptiness of the village view in the background symbolizes the complete hopelessness of the situation (Fig. 2); the friendly fall of a snow blanket over the Flemish village in which the Magi pay their homage to the Christ Child: these are in the service of the story which, to be sure, more than ever became the story of the artist's own world and intimate surroundings. Greater emphasis on landscape is seen in the works in which Bruegel followed the old tradition of the "Months" or "Seasons." The famous *Winter* (perhaps a combination of the month of January and February) in Vienna belongs to this group; and while here, too, characteristic "occupations" are still important—the slaughtering of a pig, hunters trudging through the snow—the landscape as such has become the real focus of attention and, correspondingly, of composition; witness the magnificent diagonal of the trees and the powerful contrast between flat (Netherlandish) middleground and mountainous (Italian) background. The skating rink points the way to the typical genre element of the winter landscapes of the following century, and this is even more evident in a painting by Bruegel which may have survived in copies by his eldest son only (Fig. 3). If this composition had an allegorical meaning for the people of Bruegel's time it escapes us now, and quite possibly we have here the first painted winter landscape pure and simple—i. e., one in which the painter used neither a biblical nor an allegorical "main" subject. It is true that the horizon still lies rather high and that we still get the feeling of a landscape "manipulated" for the benefit of showing as many details as possible rather than a "slice" of nature; it is also true that this is really a synthesis of landscape and genre painting since several human activities, including not only skating but also the setting of a bird snare, play a rather prominent part in it. But we are now well on our way to complete freedom.

Our conception of this freedom remains indissolubly connected

with Netherlandish painting of the seventeenth century. It was here that winter landscape painting was fully secularized, and this was done with such relish, vigor, discipline and universal excellence that we are almost tempted to forget that anything was left for later artists to accomplish. Only a few main aspects of Netherlandish winter landscape painting of the seventeenth century can here be touched upon; they are illustrated with examples by Dutch rather than Flemish masters, thus reflecting the relative superiority, in secular painting, of the independent, protestant Northern Provinces over the Spanish, catholic Southern area.

In the latter, Bruegel's new suggestions were immediately seized upon, although here, as in the North, draughtsmen and printmakers took them up more readily and more freely than most painters. These range all the way from masters concentrating on the genre aspects of Bruegel's works and his tendencies toward the "world-panorama"-like diversity and multiplicity of design and colors, to others who tried to give a more "slice"-like, more intimate and simple type of composition, and again others who developed a finer feeling for a wintry mood and atmosphere seen through the eyes of a real nature lover such as we occasionally find in paintings by Bruegel's most gifted son, Jan Bruegel the Elder. After ca. 1630, few Flemish winter landscape painters are of any major artistic significance; and again, one cannot help being perplexed by the fact that the man, whom I advisedly call the greatest of all seventeenth century Flemish landscape painters, Pieter Paul Rubens, hardly ever touched the subject of winter landscape at all.

The Dutch masters did learn a great deal from the Flemish tradition but soon introduced new features which put them far in front. It was a development which started comparatively late but produced results of incomparable beauty.

Hendrick Avercamp was not only Holland's earliest winter landscape painter but, strangely enough, Holland's only near-exclusive specialist in that field. His first works were done around 1605 and closely follow suggestions made in prints about 25 years earlier; his main motif (Fig. 4) is almost invariably that of large groups of happy and carefree skaters, an activity immensely popular in Holland, of which the great Hugo Grotius, an exact contemporary of Avercamp, cleverly rhymed:

Quae Batavum miratur hyems sola ferrea cernis;
His per aquas nec aquas ire nec ire licet.

Of iron shoes in winter time in Holland goes this talk:
On water not like water you walk and do not walk.

The often boisterous, rustic atmosphere of these works is also brilliantly caught in the comedies of the great Dutch author, Gerbrand Adriaensz. Bredero, and no less in the "Winter Song" in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, written a decade or so before Avercamp did his early works:

When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipp'd, and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,

To-whit!

To-who!—a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,

To-whit!

To-who!—a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

And when James Thomson, in the *Seasons* of 1730, concentrated his thoughts on "Sports on the Ice and Snow" he was still bound to speak of what we see in Avercamp's pictures:

. where the Rhine
Branch'd out in many a long canal extends,
From every province swarming, void of care,
Batavia rushes forth. . . .

But his style is far removed indeed from that of the pictures he may have remembered.

Subtler renderings of atmospheric effects are found in several of Avercamp's works, particularly in his later years, after ca. 1620. By that time, some other great initiators of Dutch seventeenth century landscape painting had prepared the way for further advances. Esajas van de Velde, beginning around 1610 with works still related to the old

biblical and allegorical connotations (I am thinking of an early *Winter* of his which has the Flight into Egypt for its "subject" and a *Summer* as a companion piece), became a leading master in the development which tended to dispense with Avercamp's motley crowds and to reduce multiplicity of matériel and colors in such a way as to approach the ideal of the "slice of nature" ostensibly viewed at random. This trend culminated in the winter landscapes of Jan van Goyen, in which, as often as not, a small section of the typically Dutch scenery was viewed with great intimacy and economy of design and in which, after a colorful prelude, tonal effects were achieved which made the whole scene appear bathed in a yellow-grey haze most evocative of the more cloudy winter days in the moist Dutch climate. In due time, this overall "tonality" was again abandoned, and crisp colors re-appeared, which are in fact no less characteristic of *clear* Dutch winter days, when every tiny little speck of "local" color can be discerned at the greatest distance; some such paintings were done by van Goyen himself in his later years (ca. 1650-56), others by a few masters of his own generation such as Salomon van Ruysdael, and by younger artists. The greatest work of this kind, an exception within the oeuvre of its master, is Rembrandt's incomparable little masterpiece in Kassel, painted on a small panel in 1646, perhaps on the spot (something extremely rare at that time), in which that crispness of the atmosphere of a cold winter day, that chamber-music of brown, red and steel-blue, has found its most "casual"—and its most immortal expression.

With the advent of Aert van der Neer and Jan van de Cappelle, yet another chapter opened in the history of Dutch winter landscape painting. Almost simultaneously, they discovered the pictorial possibilities that resulted from the closer study of more refined optical effects such as the reflection of sunlight on the clouds, and of sunlit clouds on ice and snow, particularly at dusk. Aert van der Neer attained great distinction in this field (he also studied anew the effect of actual snowfall), and yet his works seem almost a bit pedestrian when compared with the enchanting poetry achieved by that most amazing of all seventeenth century amateurs, the wealthy industrialist, Jan van de Cappelle, who was also the greatest master of Dutch seascape painting. Among the few dozen winter landscapes he painted are incomparable gems in which the atmospheric subtleties are as finely wrought as in the best works of van der Neer but purified through a marvellous economy of means, an elimination of all noises and a noble reserve that are altogether unforgettable (Fig. 5).

If these works mark a climax in the *lyrical* interpretation of winter, Jacob van Ruisdael may be said to have often stressed the dramatic and the foreboding element more than any other seventeenth century artist. The famous picture in Amsterdam will bear this out (Fig. 6): there is no trace here of the traditional gaiety of Avercamp's or even van Goyen's and van der Neer's scenes nor of the lyrical elegance of van de Cappelle's; it would be altogether absurd to think of skaters before this picture; the real topic is the forlorn, tragic mood of a winter day, with winter interpreted as the corollary of sadness and even death. There is a touch of pathos here which makes us realize that paintings such as these belong to a later period than the works discussed before—the 1660's and in some cases even later—and that we are therefore not so very far removed from the time when Alexander Pope saw "Pale suns, unfelt, at distance roll away" ("The Temple of Fame"), and when James Thomson was to write:

Now when the cheerless empire of the sky
To Capricorn the Centaur Archer yields,
And fierce Aquarius stains th'inverted year;
Hung o'er the furthest verge of heaven, the sun
Scarce spreads through ether the dejected day.
Faint are his gleams, and ineffectual shoot
His struggling rays, in horizontal lines,
Through the thick air; as clothed in cloudy storm,
Weak, wan and broad, he skirts the southern sky;
And, soon descending, to the long, dark night,
Wide shading all, the prostrate world resigns.

A side glance at music would here have to encompass some late seventeenth century examples from Lully (*Isis*, 1677) and Purcell, particularly the latter's wonderful "shivering" aria of Frost from *King Arthur* (1691); as contemporary with Thomson's *Winter* one would have to consider the great descriptive power of Vivaldi's *Seasons*, and it is worth recalling that Thomson's poem still dominated the text of Joseph Haydn's *Seasons* of 1801.

Thomson's language is the language of the eighteenth century. What did eighteenth century *painters* contribute to the history of winter landscape? There was of course a great deal of mere continuation of seventeenth century achievements, usually on a lower level; but this does not have to delay us here, and with it, we may leave the Netherlands behind for good. The mention of painting of the eighteenth century, outside of Italy, naturally evokes the memory

of French and English, rather than Flemish or Dutch artistic riches. French seventeenth century painting had eschewed winter almost entirely; the fact that Poussin, when painting the *Four Seasons* in his old age, represented winter by the *Deluge* was of course due to his desire to represent each season by a biblical allegory but is nevertheless symbolical of the absence of winter from the Italianate vocabulary of the great French landscape painters of that era. But things were indeed different when François Boucher, in 1755, painted his *Seasons* for Madame Pompadour, the famous series now in the Frick Collection in New York. Instead of religious allegory, court genre; instead of *grand goût, esprit*. Not content with flirting with the cavalier who is pushing her along in the handsome swan-sled, the young lady is at the same time flirting with the onlooker; and the distant snow landscape forms but a pleasant foil for this typical Rococo scene. There is of course an even better chance for a flirt when the cavalier is permitted to re-adjust the lady's skates, a chance not missed in turn by Nicolas Lancret in a painting in Stockholm (Fig. 7); and Lancret is even more in his element when he contrasts a cavalier tying his own skates with the stone-carved but distinctly shivering fountain nudes of a picture in the Louvre. Only Goya, in a set of *Seasons* designed for tapestries in 1787, refused to toe the line and represented Winter as a group of peasants trudging along in the snow and huddling together under a magnificently expressive curve but still without any intimation of real suffering or tragedy. In Great Britain, we encounter later in the eighteenth century two charming skater portraits—a little known motif which is certainly worth a special investigation. The somewhat earlier one seems to be Gilbert Stuart's *William Grant*, now in the National Gallery in Washington, which owes so much to Gainsborough that it was listed as a work by the English master in the late nineteenth century; it was exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1782. The stately pose of this gentleman on skates and the picture's unmistakable character as a full-fledged portrait raises the suspicion that it was painted as a sort of *pièce de réception*—for the sitter—in one of the better skating clubs of the time, the more so as this seems to have been the *raison d'être* for Raeburn's striking portrait (Fig. 8) of the Rev. Robert Walker (now in the National Gallery in Edinburgh), painted most probably in 1784 and seemingly bent upon outdoing Stuart's achievement with regard to elegance and free movement. It is easily one of Raeburn's masterpieces, and the wintry-blue of the sky and the ice on Duddingston Loch, in conjunction with the refined rose and grey tints in the middleground and the black of the Reverend's



Fig. 1. February, from *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*. Chantilly, Musée Condé.



Fig. 2. Pieter Bruegel, Winter Landscape with Slaughter of the Innocents. Vienna Museum.

Fig. 3. After Peter Bruegel the Elder, Winter Landscape with Bird Trap. Whereabouts unknown





Fig. 4. Hendrick Avercamp, *Winter Landscape*. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees, The National Gallery, London.

Fig. 5. Jan van de Cappelle, *Winter Landscape*, 1653. Whereabouts unknown.





Fig. 6. Jacob van Ruisdael, Winter Landscape. Courtesy of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 7. Nicolas Lancret, Putting on the Ice Skates. Stockholm, National Museum.



Fig. 8. Henry Raeburn, The Rev. Robert Walker Skating. Edinburgh, National Gallery. Courtesy of The National Galleries of Scotland.

Fig. 9. C

Fig. 1



Fig. 9. Caspar David Friedrich, Winter, Eldena Monastery. 1819. Berlin, National Gallery.

Fig. 10. Maurice de Vlaminck, Winter Landscape. Whereabouts unknown.





Fig. 11. Max Beckmann, *The Skaters*. 1932. Whereabouts unknown.

dress make it particularly attractive from the point of view of sheer *peinture*.

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that *landscape* painting plays a very minor role in most eighteenth century representations of winter that are of any real artistic significance. Instead, nature was mostly used as a mere foil for human activity of one kind or another. We remember that rendering human activity during winter time gave rise to winter landscape painting in the first place; but it is almost perplexing to see that even then, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the human figures were *co-ordinated* with nature whereas now they actually *dominate* nature, thus forming a particularly striking contrast with nature's predominance over man in the seventeenth century. Another decisive difference lies in the fact that while in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it was the life, labors and pastimes of the lower and middle classes that were primarily represented in paintings, the eighteenth century concentrated almost wholly on the pastimes of the upper strata of society. There is of course nothing accidental about this; we are now moving in the aristocratic and higher middle class circles of the French and British monarchies, rather than in the middle and lower ones of democratic Holland (even in Spanish Flanders of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the bourgeoisie had played a very great role as patrons of painting). But when the French monarchy broke down, when the pretty Versailles game was up and even in Great Britain the tune began to change—when everywhere the *Ancien Régime* gave way to a new middle class culture and the Rococo and its equivalent trends were drowned in the rising tide of Classicism, *Sturm und Drang* and Romanticism, it was landscape, landscape *pur sang*, landscape as a personification of man's innermost yearnings, which emerged with new and even unique vigor; and *winter* landscape did not stay behind.

In painting, this basically romantic, pantheistic interpretation of landscape was primarily a German phenomenon; its greatest representatives were, with considerable differences of conception and artistic rank Philipp Otto Runge, Gustav Carus, and Caspar David Friedrich. Runge and Carus were writers as well as painters (and in a sense, greater writers than painters); Friedrich no writer but a great painter. Runge's and Carus' writings were deeply indebted to the philosophical and poetical worshippers of landscape that preceded them. When Novalis wrote: "to romanticize is to give the ordinary and everyday a nobler

meaning, the known the distinction of the unknown, the finite the aura of the infinite," he did not only define Romanticism as a whole but also romantic landscape in contrast to the elegant genre-landscape-combination of the Rococo as well as to the simple, down-to-earth landscape with genre motifs which had dominated Dutch landscape painting of the seventeenth century. Runge echoed his older friends when he said: "Nature will be the medium through which the new art shall represent *man's spiritual life*"; it is strange to think that for them, it was Joseph Haydn who embodied romantic music, Haydn, who in 1801 composed his *Seasons* along the didactic lines of Thomson's poem and who to us seems to stand so firmly on pre-romantic ground; but we must realize that Schubert's *Winterreise* (1827) had not yet been written. However that may be, it is Friedrich alone who has given us great winter landscape paintings which embody the very epitome of the romantic creed. Even before he did his first oil paintings he had harked back to the older idea of a series of the *Seasons* in sepia drawings, finished about 1803; and already here, winter appears in conjunction with prominent bare trees and a ruin, the symbols of death in nature and of the futility of human life—without the promise of resurrection being conveyed by the rainbow, which Jacob van Ruisdael, in one of the rare moments of pre-romantic mood in seventeenth century Dutch painting, had added to the same symbols of decay in his *Jewish Cemetery*, known to Friedrich from the Dresden version. In 1804, Friedrich made a drawing with the representation of his own funeral at winter time—surely a subject than which nothing could be more romantic. Bare trees, ruins, and now deep snow as well, give to the *Winter* of the *Seasons* of 1808—a series of oil paintings—its profound mood of death and despair, enhanced by the stooped figure of an old monk. Again and again, winter attracted Friedrich with magic power. In 1819 he painted the most famous and most elaborate example of his Winter-Death equations (Fig. 9), the one which Carus called "probably the most profoundly poetic of all recent landscape paintings." There is nothing in this picture that is not expressive of death: burial procession, crosses, ruins, snow, bare trees, all are parts of a pattern of decay which has been carried to extremes of frozen, either entirely rigid or precariously bending and crinkling forms, the rhythm of which evokes a romantic fantasy of an organ fugue mingled with the sighs of an Aeolian harp. The *Early Snow* in Hamburg, painted about 1814, has no allegorical connotations but fascinates by its expression of silent grandeur on a small scale, achieved by simplicity of design and, charac-

teristically, by the total absence of human figures, a feature lacking throughout the previous history of our subject. Neither is there any sign of life in the moving representation of the arctic shipwreck of the good ship *Hope*, a painting of 1822 (Hamburg) which was the joint result of Friedrich's penetrating observation of towering ice-packs formed on the river Elbe during the winter of 1821 and the reading of a literary source, a report by an American, Captain Matthew Perry. The devastating, brute force of the ice as the seafarer's inexorable enemy has been most powerfully rendered:

And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

as Coleridge had envisioned it twenty-five years before. It suffices to think of Currier and Ives' disarmingly straight record of a similar situation to become aware of the greatness of Friedrich's vision. "Voilà un homme," said the French sculptor, David d'Angers, of Friedrich, "qui a découvert la tragédie du paysage."

As landscape paintings multiplied hundredfold under the impact of the realistic tendencies of the later nineteenth century, the elevated plane of the romanticists was abandoned for the sake of a more matter-of-fact interpretation of man's environment; and Impressionism disposed with thoroughness of whatever remains of pantheistic idealism might have lingered on. This was an inevitable process, indeed a salutary one in the face of hollow ambitions badly realized by a late generation of quasi-romanticists. Claude Monet's tendency to undergo the fascination of a winter day primarily in terms of atmosphere and changing—and challenging—light effects, transitory and casual as those of his haystacks and cathedrals and railway stations, produced a few paintings of extraordinary beauty, particularly during those inspiring winter days he spent near the town of Vétheuil; witness the magnificent painting in the Frick Collection in New York with the silhouette of the town in the background and the partly frozen river in the foreground—a work which combines atmospheric effects with an excellence of composition which does transcend the casual character of many other paintings of this kind and links it to the finest achievements of the Netherlandish tradition. There is a somewhat astonishing dearth of striking impressionistic poems on the winter theme; and in impressionistic music, vocal as well as instrumental (*Seasons* again!), winter is represented by few works of more than superficial charm.

Post-Impressionism characteristically reverted to the interpretation

of a winter day as an expression of *mood* rather than as an atmospheric phenomenon alone, as is demonstrated by a work of Édouard Vlaminck (Fig. 10) which must stand here for a host of similar examples of this trend. The contrast with Monet is striking; something of the romantic attitude has re-entered the scene in the identification of winter with gloom and solitude and foreboding, although in terms of much more simplified forms and a more strongly underlined structure than we find in romantic paintings; if we look back from here to the seventeenth century it is not van Goyen who comes to mind but Jacob van Ruisdael (Fig. 6).

And *modern* art strictly speaking? Interest in atmospheric subtleties is certainly not one of its characteristics, indeed nature for its own sake in *all* its aspects plays an increasingly small role. One would surely hesitate to call any outstanding modern painter a landscapist, with all due deference to some fine works by Picasso and Rouault, mostly belonging to their earlier periods. One can risk the generalization that it is *man* who again predominates over nature wherever modern painting clings to "objective" representation; man with his sorrows and joys, his fears and self-assertions. Such an art will show no interest in winter except in so far as it affects man's life and mind. This was equally true of the eighteenth century: of Boucher, Lancret, Raeburn and Stuart; but at that time, the people in whom art was interested—or rather, in terms of that period, who were interested in art—were almost exclusively the members of an aristocracy that could afford to select but the pleasant elements of winter time such as skating, sled-riding and flirting on the ice. This would surely never do today; we should rather expect, either (and probably on a lower level) the representation of winter's hardships for the poor, the soldier or any other victim of the season, or (and probably on a higher level) the formulation of a deeper meaning of winter to man in terms of a more universal, symbolical or allegorical language—in other words, something akin to the art of Pieter Bruegel, whose winter landscapes are not accidentally so generally known, beloved and admired today. Max Beckmann's *Skaters* of 1932 (Fig. 11) seems to bear out the existence of such a trend. Here winter is fun, to be sure—but fun with strong overtones of an allusion to folly. The men who carry the girl have donned clown-like costumes; the girl wears skates but does not skate, yielding as she does to the amorous antics of the other "fools"; and the entire composition of the work conforms very much to the traditional pattern of the *Wheel of Fortune*, so well-known from the medieval allegories on the folly and instability of human life. There is more of Bruegel's spirit here than meets the eye at first glance.

From winter seen under the aspect of the "Labors of the Months" and the Bible I first turned to winter landscape as the scene of everyday human activity and as a phenomenon loved and rendered for its own optic and poetic possibilities; and, after observing an oscillation between the extremes of society pictures and glorifications of nature in its purest or most sublime aspects, I suggested that the pendulum may have swung back to a view of winter as a condition of man rather than a phenomenon of nature. Having made this suggestion regarding the present I shall all the more strenuously guard against making any predictions; after all, I am but an historian, not a prophet.

Social Disintegration in "The Wings of the Dove"

In his half-century as observer and historian of the western world, Henry James developed from a chronicler of national differences to a prophet of a social disintegration international in scope.¹ James's late novels reflect what his notebooks and letters often state—his vision of the impending collapse of western civilization, of "this overwhelming, self-defeating chaos or cataclysm toward which the whole thing is drifting."² That James was unable to continue work on *The Ivory Tower* after the outbreak of World War I³ testifies not only to the dependence of his fiction on his day-to-day response to history, but also to his apprehension of what was actually taking place—the visible destruction of all that had meaning to the civilized consciousness.⁴

James always remained faithful to the Balzacian concept of the

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¹ I am indebted here, and elsewhere in this essay, to R. P. Blackmur, "The Loose and Baggy Monsters of Henry James," *The Lion and the Honeycomb* (New York, 1955), 268-288; and R. W. B. Lewis, "The Vision of Grace: James's 'The Wings of the Dove,'" *MFS*, III (Spring, 1957), 33-40.

² *The Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock (New York, 1947), p. 207. See also p. 196.

³ Instead, as Percy Lubbock writes, he "took up *The Sense of the Past* again, the fantasmal story he had abandoned for its difficulty in 1900—finding its unreality now remote enough to be beyond the reach of war" (*The Letters of Henry James*, ed. Percy Lubbock [New York, 1920], II, 380).

⁴ It is one of the purposes of this paper to show that James's treatment of the decay of western civilization is far more mature and complex than Michael Swan (whose view, I suspect, is fairly typical) suggests in his remarks about "the feeling which much of James's work gives that he is a gentle prophet of dissolution. The world of leisure and wealth which is the usual world of his novels is drawing towards its end, and it must have been his Puritanical side which seemed to sense an odor of corruption, almost of evil, about this world which his more hedonistic side admired and whose pleasures it adored" (*Henry James, Writers and Their Works*: No. 5 [London, 1950], p. 9).

novelist as cultural historian, but his method was increasingly to be through intensity rather than through expansiveness. Jamesian intensity involves metaphor, symbolism, and ambiguity, all realized through the scenic and pictorial methods. Through intensity, James, always the historian of fine consciences, became more and more acute in relating the individual intelligence to its historical context.

One way of defining James's ideal of civilization is to say that not only should society offer the individual a contact with the aesthetic and social values of history—art and manners—but also that these values must be consistent with actual human behavior. In James's works there are four major deviations from this ideal: in America there is no past, and thus none of its values inform the present; in the Europe of *The American*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, and the other international stories of the seventies and eighties, past and present are inseparable, but inherent in the beauty of age is the evil of age; London, the scene of James's "middle period" fiction, has renounced the past for the glaring vulgarities and immoralities of the present; finally, in the works of James's "major phase," Americans and Europeans alike undermine and at the same time struggle to maintain the values of the past. In this last stage, forms, surfaces, and manners have become all but incompatible with the human standards they should ideally reflect.

In *The Ambassadors*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl*, James varies slightly his dominant theme of appearance and reality to dramatize his vision of the American-European world straining to preserve itself from internal destruction. Appearance, the historical heritage of art and manners, is no longer reality: at best it is a thin disguise lending meretricious splendor to a behavior alien to it; at worst it is a thing to be kept in museums, a refuge from reality. The reality of greed, with its mechanics of intrigue and duplicity, seeks the appearance of art and manners. There is a consistent dichotomy between the form and the content of civilization, between past and present, between society and individual. When the form collapses, society becomes anarchy and merely the sum-total of individual grasping egos. The value of the form is ambiguous, for it adds the horror of deceit to the evil of economic and human plunder; but also it is a restraint: it provides a uniformity of standards and a social cohesiveness without which there would be no community at all. Society and civilization collapse together when Strether sees the duplicity of Mme. de Vionnet and Chad, and when Lord Mark reveals Densher's plot

to Milly. In *The Golden Bowl* Maggie Verver has her vision of reality, but instead of withering she struggles successfully to maintain appearances. But in *The Ambassadors* and *The Wings of the Dove*, the perceptions of Strether and Milly of the hollowness of form bring about the death of civilization. Such are the Jamesian moments of exclusion, in which the individual finds himself isolated, unsupported by values outside of himself, unable to define himself through his social and historical position. James's last novels treat the dual movements of society's dissolution and the individual's discovery of his essential self.

A comparison of *The Wings of the Dove* with an earlier James novel like *The Portrait of a Lady* indicates why it is that the quest for identity follows inevitably from the collapse of civilization. Isabel Archer's problem is to reconcile the values of a traditional society with her personal ideals. At opposite poles are Henrietta Stackpole, whose limitations are measured by her absolute hostility to Europe, and Mme. Merle, who is morally deficient because she lives "exclusively for the world" (IV, 144).⁵ Mme. Merle tells Isabel, "There's no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we're each of us made up of some cluster of appurtenances" (III, 287). The novel reveals the need for synthesis between the personal and the social code.⁶ The norm is clearly Ralph Touchett, who appreciates the need for "appurtenances" to the self—that is why he persuades his father to make Isabel rich—and yet is ultimately self-reliant in his moral judgments. In the world of *The Wings of the Dove*, however, no such compromise is possible. Thus the moral person is forced back on himself, denied any kind of meaningful social relationship. James then dramatizes both the cause—the dissociation of appearance and meaning in western culture—and the effect—the need for the individual to acquire identity as an isolated person—of the collapse of civilization.

The Wings of the Dove treats a later stage in the collapse of western civilization than *The Ambassadors*. *The Ambassadors* deals with the last gasping breath of the old order; by the time of *The Wings* the old order is dead, visible only in its decay. Strether is the last Jamesian pilgrim to gain a relationship with what James has termed the "visitable

⁵ Volume and page references are to *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*, The New York Edition (New York, 1907-1909).

⁶ See Frederick C. Crews, *The Tragedy of Manners: Moral Drama in the Later Novels of Henry James* (New Haven, 1957), pp. 13-19.

past,"⁷ as Mme. de Vionnet is the last European whose beauty is not solely a pretense, a false allure.

The scene of *The Wings of the Dove* is the western world: the New York home of Milly Theale⁸ and the London and Venice settings embrace the moral as well as the geographical limits of western culture. The England which has its center in Lancaster Gate (ironically the entrance to the English past leads but to hideous modernity) is given over completely to materialism. Its art has degenerated to the colossal vulgarity of Maud Lowder, the "Britannia of the Market Place" (XIX, 30) in whom "There was a whole side of Britannia, the side of her florid philistinism, her plumes and her trains, her fantastic furniture and heaving bosom, the false gods of her taste and false notes of her talk . . ." (XIX, 31). The England of Maud Lowder has found the aristocratic legacy of manners at odds with the material drive, and has thus drained it of content. Force it finds more effective. Imperial and gross, Maud is a lioness; she is imagined as outfitted with "a helmet, a shield, a trident and a ledger" (XIX, 31). The emblematic Maud is blind to all but mass and quantity. Like her predecessor Mona Brigstock of *The Spoils of Poynton*, she "is all will, without the smallest leak of force into taste or vision, into any sense of shades or relations or proportions."⁹ Maud is "the most remarkable woman in England" (XIX, 180) because she sets the tone for an empire, because she is "unscrupulous and immoral" (XIX, 31) in an absolute way. The lesser figures about her, Lord Mark and Lionel Croy, are less typical only in that they are less effective. Maud Lowder's London is essentially the London of *What Maisie Knew* and *The Awkward Age*, with the major difference that in *The Wings* James has made it unmistakably clear that the part stands for the whole.

⁷ *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces by Henry James*, introduction by R. P. Blackmur (New York, 1934), p. 164.

⁸ America is less an operative force in *The Wings* than in *The Ambassadors* and *The Golden Bowl*. However, what James says in his preface about Milly's nationality deserves comment: he speaks of there being "fifty reasons for her national and social status. She should be the last fine flower . . . of an 'old' New York stem. . ." (*The Art of the Novel*, p. 292). In Milly James is invoking the memory not only of Minny Temple, but also of the New York of his youth, which, as his late fiction (especially "A Round of Visits" and "Crazy Cornelia") makes abundantly clear, has lost its charm and innocence. To James's mind materialism and vulgarity have corrupted America as well as England, so that in the world of *The Wings of the Dove* only an anachronism will serve James as a suitable tragic victim, for the moral attributes which James required of his heroine he could no longer detect in Anglo-American culture.

⁹ *The Art of the Novel*, p. 131.

Money is the controlling force in *The Wings of the Dove*; in the London world the economic drive is the normal motivation. Milly recognizes early that her English friends "appeared all . . . to think tremendously of money" (XIX, 195). Economic values subvert human values throughout, not just in Kate's identification of Milly with her wealth, the easy assumption that leads to the central action of the novel, but in the systematic reduction of all quality to quantity. For example, Kate's father and sister reject Kate's offer of family loyalty in favor of her potential cash value as Aunt Maud's ward. Aunt Maud visualizes Kate as a financial hold: ". . . I've been keeping [Kate's presence] for the comfort of my declining years. I've watched it long; I've been saving it up and letting it, as you say of investments, appreciate, and you may judge whether, now it has begun to pay so, I'm likely to consent to treat for it with any but a high bidder" (XIX, 82). Milly to Maud also has negotiable value, as a bribe to Densher: "The pieces fell together for him as he felt her thus buying him off, and buying him . . . with Miss Theale's money" (XX, 67). The relationship between Kate and Densher gradually becomes corrupted through association with the acquisitive drive; the natural has been made unnatural, so much so that Kate's visit to Densher's rooms is thought of by both as a payment for services rendered. Densher fondly thinks of "The force of the engagement, the quantity of the article to be supplied, the special solidity of the compact, the way above all, as a service for which the price named by him had been magnificently paid . . ." (XX, 237). Kate, before she formulates her plan, predicts that "Milly would pay a hundred per cent.—and even to the end, doubtless, through the nose . . ." (XIX, 180). Milly, though she is morally detached from her wealth and innocent in spite of her millions, dies a victim of economic competition.

It is particularly significant that Milly's great deed consists of a bestowal of her money. It is an act of love, an expression of forgiveness, and a transcendence of self. Nevertheless, since money is the destructive force in the novel, the nature of the act is tainted although its motive is not. Milly's benevolence cannot purify her money. It is appropriate that the practical result of her gift is to sever Kate and Densher, for it was a want of money that kept them from marrying in the beginning. Milly is not corrupted by her money; yet the possession of it causes her destruction. Money destroys those who are associated with it—those who have it, those who desire it, those who contend for it.

Thus one's moral stature is determined by the degree to which he is free from money. Maud Lowder is surely damned from the beginning; and Kate demonstrates her own damnation at the end, when she rejects spirit for matter, when she burns the unread letter of grace but rips open the envelope containing the check. In giving her the money, Densher gives "poor Kate her freedom" (XX, 396): the ambiguity of her being poor spiritually when rich materially and enslaved morally when free economically points the hard lesson of James's novel. Milly grows dependent on money only when social pressures compel her to buy the sanctuary of Palazzo Leporelli and the protection of Eugenio. She uses her wealth as "a counter-move to fate" (XX, 142). Yet she gains her lasting salvation only when she renounces money utterly.

Money and manners conflict throughout. In a society in which the only reality is money, traditional forms of intercourse—which should ideally reflect honor, sincerity, and intelligence—are necessarily false and hollow; and yet they constitute the last barrier against barbarism. The ambiguity of manners in *The Wings of the Dove* is well conveyed when Milly confronts Densher, just returned from his American tour, and Kate in the National Gallery. Having been suspicious all along of Kate's closeness to Densher and continually embarrassed by Kate's concealment of the intimacy, Milly is placed in the false position of having to pretend surprise at the discovery of their attachment. Kate and Densher are discomfited also; yet they too must carry on the pretense. The weight of the unspoken—the real—oppresses Milly. She sadly recognizes that the incident obviates any closeness in her future dealings with Kate and Densher. Yet, without the elaborate pretense that all is just as it should be—with the jointly maintained lie that Densher's visit to the United States is an appropriate conversation piece—the entire situation would collapse: all would be exposed and isolation would be total. If manners, what Densher calls "the mere aesthetic instinct of mankind" (XX, 299), are strained and deceptive, they yet remain necessary for social existence.

For Maud and Kate manners are the machinery for economic gain; for Densher and Milly they prohibit sincerity and intensity in personal relationships. Milly and Densher are among the first of James's protagonists to seek beauty and truth not in human institutions, now sterile and meaningless, but in human nature itself. When the civilized community falls apart James and his intelligent characters must transcend the temporal and the local to try to understand experience in

terms of the permanent conditions of life. Kate, Milly, and Densher reach the point where they can no longer exist as morally free creatures in terms of manners or money, and therefore must acknowledge or renounce their humanity. Since society is dehumanized, to be human is to be socially isolated. Only through morality—and not through manners or money—can humanity be achieved.

Milly Theale's assumption that her siege of London will mean full nourishment of the sensibilities is an ironic illusion. She soon recognizes that her celebrated "success" is cheap and false. The great world, or the great English world, has simply crumpled beneath the weight of materialism. Unlike Strether and Maggie Verver she recognizes rapidly that the old forms of civilization are empty. Soon after leaving her Alpine peak and plunging into the "abyss"¹⁰ of the London world, she finds society, in the sense of traditional and splendid styles of conduct, to be superficial and pretentious. She sees immediately—though not in all intensity—what Maggie Verver is to call "the thing hideously *behind*" (XXIV, 237), the reality behind the appearance. Lord Mark's surface is soon penetrated: "Why did he hover before her as a potentially insolent noble? . . . she had, on the spot, with her first plunge into the obscure depths of a society constituted from far back, encountered the interesting phenomenon of complicated, of possibly sinister motive" (XIX, 152-154). Milly's "banquet of initiation" in London society is primarily an introduction to the false, substanceless manners that thinly disguise the greed beneath. Even in the early London chapters we look forward to Densher's wry reflection on the world he finds himself in: "He had supposed himself civilized; but if this was civilization——! One could smoke one's pipe outside when twaddle was within" (XX, 44). Or we may look forward to the central image of a later James novel, the cracked crystal bowl gilded in gold.

Cut off in the beginning from any real relation with "all the ages" (XIX, 109), Milly seeks meaning in art. She finds "largeness of style" (XIX, 208) not at Lancaster Gate but at Matcham, and not through society but art. Milly leaves the Alps for London because "it had rolled over her that what she wanted of Europe was 'people' . . ."

¹⁰ Jean Kimball, "The Abyss and the Wings of the Dove: The Image as a Revelation," *NCF*, X (March, 1956), 281-300, has discussed the meaning and importance of the "abyss" image in *The Wings of the Dove*. Miss Kimball, however, sees the abyss as applying only to Milly Theale's external predicament. Frederick C. Crews, *The Tragedy of Manners*, p. 72, calls attention to the recurrent water images, which, in my opinion, support the abyss images.

(XIX, 134). In the overstuffed vulgarity of Lancaster Gate, however, the reality of egotism is unrelieved and virtually undisguised by the appearance of art. But in Matcham people and scene merge into a single vision—a picture. "The great historic house had, for Milly, beyond terrace and garden, as the centre of an almost extravagantly grand Watteau-composition, a tone as of old gold kept 'down' by the quality of the air, summer full-flushed but attuned to the general perfect taste" (XIX, 208). Here life comes up to art—in a single splendid illusion for Milly: "Everything was great, of course, in great pictures, and it was doubtless precisely a part of the brilliant life—since the brilliant life, as one had faintly figured it, just *was* humanly led—that all impressions within its area partook of its brilliancy . . ." (XIX, 209). The "mild common carnival of good-nature—a mass of London people together" (XIX, 218) gains immensely through the atmosphere of beauty, so that Milly unconsciously dismisses her earlier impressions of ugliness. If society were art, she thinks, then "to accept it without question might be as good a way as another of feeling life" (XIX, 219). The empty chatter of Lord Mark and the banalities of people named Lord and Lady Aldershaw are transformed by the transcendent beauty of the Bronzino. "Once more things melted together—the beauty and the history and the facility and the splendid midsummer glow: it was a sort of magnificent maximum, the pink dawn of an apotheosis coming so curiously soon" (XIX, 220). The apotheosis is personal and prophetic, rather than social and actual; it suggests that only through suffering and death can Milly approach the magnificence of art, that, according to a basic metaphor of the novel,¹¹ Milly can go up only by going down, that she can be reborn into the immortal beauty of the portrayed woman only by being, like her, "dead, dead, dead" (XIX, 221).

But until her apotheosis art and life remain the separate poles of Milly's experience. There are several efforts at reconciliation, with results always tenuous and implications always ironic. In The National Gallery, Milly finds refuge from an English society that Kate had but shortly before described to her as "a strange and dreadful monster, calculated to devour the unwary, to abase the proud, to scandalize the good . . ." (XIX, 277).¹² The relief afforded by "the quiet chambers,

¹¹ Once more I am making use of R. W. B. Lewis's insights ("The Vision of Grace," pp. 36-37); I am in slight disagreement with Professor Lewis, however, in my consideration of the ambiguity of the metaphor.

¹² As Quentin Anderson (*The American Henry James* [New Brunswick, N. J.,

nobly overwhelming, rich but slightly veiled" (XIX, 287-288), clashes startlingly with the revelation of the real. The scene parallels the recognition scene in *The Ambassadors*, when Strether's imaginative Lumbinet—Europe as art—fuses with his vision of evil—Europe as life.¹³ A tourist's oblique observation that what she sees is in "The English style" (XIX, 291) at first is taken by Milly to be a reference to a painting, but she soon sees that the subject of the comment is Merton Densher. Life intrudes upon art, and unlike the situation in *The Ambassadors*, in which a synthesis occurs, here there is only clash. The relief of the gallery gives way to the pain of social existence.

Beginning with Book Sixth the strain of appearances drives Milly to art—to her rented Venetian palace, which is inadequate because its beauty, its inherent traditional values, its silent profundity reflect nothing of the Europe of the early twentieth century. James dramatizes throughout the second volume the meaning of Venice in the modern world: it, like London, has made the sacrifice of art to matter (James invokes the commercial as well as the aesthetic past of the Italian city), so that Palazzo Leporelli has the same relation to the controlling ethos of Venice as does Matcham to that of London. "Palazzo Leporelli held its history still in its great lap, even like a painted idol, a solemn puppet hung about with decorations" (XX, 135). The imagery suggests artificiality and sterility, for the essential Venice is better represented by the shady commercialism of Eugenio and Pasquale. Although granted a luster by Susan Stringham's journalistic imagination and by Milly's presence, the old palace along the grand canal is but a relic of a decayed past.

The Venetian past is purposefully present not in its beauty, but in its evil—the two components of Europe that formed an inseparable unity to the earlier James. Densher, the man of intellect, sees the Venetians of the present as "members of a race in whom vacancy was but a nest of darkness—not a vain surface, but a place of withdrawal in which something obscure, something always ominous, indistinguishably lived" (XX, 256).¹⁴ When Lord Mark awakens Milly to

1957], p. 247) has noted, English society is frequently likened to a predatory beast in *The Wings of the Dove*. He calls attention to the comparison of Milly to "a Christian maiden, in the arena, caressingly martyred. It was the nosing and fumbling not of lions and tigers, but of domestic animals let loose as for the joke" (XX, 42).

¹³ See my article, "The Ambassadors: Strether's Vision of Evil," *NCF*, XIV (June 1959), 54-56.

¹⁴ Seventeen years before *The Wings of the Dove*, James wrote of Venice as

the monstrous plot against her, the Venetian scene reflects the personal catastrophe and gives it extensive dimensions. The great black storm means tumult and cataclysm. "It was a Venice all of evil that had broken out . . . a Venice of cold lashing rain from a low black sky, of wicked wind raging through narrow passes, of general arrest and interruption . . ." (XX, 259). The Piazza San Marco, symbolic of European civilization as a whole, is darkened to blackness and overwhelmed by violence: "the whole place, in its huge elegance, the grace of its conception and the beauty of its detail, was more than ever like a great drawing-room, the drawing-room of Europe, profaned and bewildered by some reverse of fortune" (XX, 261). The effort of all to contain evil by appearances fails. Milly Theale's death is the death of a civilization: the gray of a London dominated by materialism and the black of a Venice traditionally malign combine to kill her.

Milly believes that she can resist pain only by remaining in the fortress tower of her palace, surrounded by the sterile formalities of art. "Ah not to go down—never, never to go down" (XX, 147), she sighs to the uncomprehending Lord Mark. The idea of "remaining aloft in the divine dustless air" (XX, 147) is a false approach to the ideal, for purification and apotheosis require for James, as for Conrad, immersion in the destructive element. Thus when Milly does "come down" (XX, 203), literally to "the great saloon" (XX, 203) beneath her rooms in Palazzo Leporelli, figuratively to the abyss of human life, she discards for the first time "her almost monastic, her hitherto inveterate black" (XX, 214), the color of death, for white, the color of life. The incident is a picture: Milly diffusing "in wide warm waves the spell of a general, a kind of beatific mildness" (XX, 213); Densher and Kate speaking, for the first time, of the unspeakable—"Since she's to die I'm to marry her?" (XX, 225) Just as the historic grandeur of Matcham had transformed the ugly into the beautiful, so the splendor of the descent of the dove brings to the scene of betrayal the enveloping atmosphere of art. For once Susan Stringham's extravagant imagination has validity. "It's a Veronese picture, as near as can be . . ." (XX, 206), she tells Densher. But unlike her tower, Milly's surroundings below have human composition. "You're in the picture"

having a tradition of immorality, especially in commercial matters, though the jocular tone of the early comments conveys nothing of the atmosphere of evil which pervades Venice in *The Wings*: "[The Venetian race] has not a genius for morality, and indeed makes few pretensions in that direction. It scruples not to represent the false as true, and is liable to confusion in the attribution of property" (*Portraits of Places* [Boston, 1885], p. 21).

(XX, 207), Kate tells Densher, and so is everyone. Life and art fuse when Milly goes down: "... Milly, let loose among them in a wonderful white dress, brought them somehow into relation with something that made them more finely genial; so that if the Veronese picture of which he had talked with Mrs. Stringham was not quite constituted, the comparative prose of previous hours, the traces of insensibility qualified by 'beating down,' were at last nobly disowned" (XX, 213). Surrounded by her conspirators, the white-robed Milly begins to live just as she begins to die. "Since I've lived all these years as if I were dead, I shall die, no doubt, as if I were alive . . ." (XX, 199), she had said earlier. It is then not the art of the gallery or of the palace that will enable Milly to "live," but the moral response to immoral humanity, which becomes in itself spiritual beauty.

Through Milly's developing awareness of the irrelevance of the art of the past to modern life, James dramatizes the disintegration of civilization. Throughout the novel he reveals the ever widening breach between individual needs and the social framework. One inevitably finds himself in a position where he must define himself through either his social position or his isolated self. Deprived of access to meaning through art or manners, Maud Lowder derives her motivations and morality from British culture in general. We find her in the beginning as we find her in the end—a loyal apostle to money. But Kate, Densher, and Milly are, in the beginning, undefined by status or creed. The novel records their efforts and decisions toward achieving identity. For each the existing situation is inadequate.

Kate's personal qualities are great: she esteems family loyalty over private gain, the need for love over the need for profit, and moral freedom over moral commitment. But her father, her sister, and her aunt comprise for her a world in which selfhood and vulgarity set the tone, in which the material urge is unrefined by sentiment or sensibility. Thus, in her visit to her father's squalid rooms, we find Kate for the most part glancing into the mirror, holding fast to that which is herself.

In Kate's case the standard Jamesian ambiguity towards money has an added twist. The ordinary dilemma is there: to acquire money is ugly, but the possession of it is the *sine qua non* for the good life. In most of James's novels, however, the social scene itself remains aloof from the economic process: fortune hunter and business man alike are anomalies, inconsistent with the placid solemnity of age and beauty. But the London world can be understood only in terms of money. To

pursue magnificence Kate has no choice but to accept the code of Aunt Maud. Her effort to reconcile the human value of love and the barbaric value of money must fail. Therefore, when she seeks her own image in Densher's mirror in the novel's final scene, she signalizes her separation from her lover, whose own renunciation of money forces Kate to retreat to the damning security of wealth.

Kate's initial conflict is between acceptance of family poverty for the sake of loyalty and acceptance of Aunt Maud's wealth for the sake of magnificence. When Kate, rebuffed by her father and sister, moves to Lancaster Gate, she hesitates to surrender her will to Maud. In "her actual high retreat" (XX, 56-57) above Maud's "counting-house" (XIX, 30), she is precariously detached and uncommitted. The parallel to Milly in her tower is clear enough. Here Kate's relation to Maud forecasts Milly's eventual relation to Kate. But when Kate descends she reconciles the standards of Maud with her love for Densher, and thus becomes converted to society; whereas Milly holds firm to her personal values, her moral integrity.

What we find in Kate is a great will who accepts and then uses society on its own terms. Her object is money and her method is manners. Once she initiates her plot, from the moment she decides not to tell Milly about her engagement to Densher, she remains inflexible. To Densher, Kate is "deep" (XIX, 175), "a whole library of the unknown, the uncut" (XX, 62), but ironically there is nothing beneath the surface but the will: the moral intelligence has surrendered itself to money.

To the very end Densher marvels at Kate's "high sobriety and beautiful self-command. . . she had her perfect manner, which *was* her decorum" (XX, 316). Because of her mastery over manners, her skillful control of appearances, her intrigue almost succeeds. But the lady of appearances pays the great price of being definable only through appearances; she is magnificent only in contrast with the cheap and the showy. In Venice Kate's brilliance pales before Milly's: "As a striking young presence she was practically superseded" (XX, 216). Later, when Densher meets Kate at Marion's wretched house, he observes that ". . . Kate wouldn't have been in the least the creature she was if what was just round them hadn't mismatched her . . ." (XX, 365). The conclusion of course reveals Kate's magnificence for what it is—a thing of death—in contrast with the life-giving spiritual magnificence of Milly.

If Kate commits herself to Aunt Maud, Densher commits himself

to Kate. But his association always admits the possibility of his detachment. For one thing, Densher becomes involved not through strength of will, but through weakness of will; for another, his motivation is not greed, but love. His loyalty to Kate, like Kate's loyalty to Maud, is an imperfect moral standard, but it is supported by affection rather than a prudent concern for appearances.

Densher too at the beginning is uncommitted. His James-like continental education has given him, if not a moral firmness, at least a detachment from the English trait of regarding money excessively. In his quest for identity, Densher—through Milly's grace—chooses the hitherto unrealized self over the materialism of his age. Through indecision he becomes implicated in Kate's scheme. His good nature and gentlemanliness carry him through to deceive Milly. But when he finds the demands of appearance too oppressive, he finds the necessity of self-assertion compelling. In his brooding walks about Venice Densher faces fully "the interesting question of whether he had really no will left" (XX, 177). His problem is really very much the same as Milly's, for, unlike Maud and Kate, both require the sustenance of immediate and honest personal relationships, which are by definition unattainable in a society held together by appearances. Since the association with Kate has been beclouded by duplicity, he seeks out—half consciously—the companionship of Milly. Densher's passion and Milly's love are both frustrated by Kate's scheme of appearances.

Densher is a forerunner of a dominant character type of modern literature: he leads to Eliot's Prufrock, Conrad's Heyst, and Greene's Scobie. He is the non-heroic yet perceptive man, driven to self-understanding by his weakness of will and horror of ugliness. Like Kate and Milly, Densher plunges into the abyss, which for him as for the others is both internal and external—the private depths and the social depths. If Milly's descent to the abyss reveals spiritual love and Kate's reveals only will, Densher's reveals, not the will he had sought to find, but a capacity for sanctifying grace. For he remains weak always.¹⁵ His

¹⁵ Densher's shifting of allegiance from the sensual beauty of Kate to the spiritual beauty of Milly is not to be taken as an operation of will; he succumbs to the stronger force. And it is not until the last scene that we see Densher free of Kate's influence. Even when most pained by guilt, he lacks strength to break the bond with Kate. Naïvely, he desires escape—not only from his complicity in the crime, but also from the necessity of asserting himself. Densher hopes, even while Milly is dying, for "some power to let him off" (XX, 304). Not until Milly "spreads her wings" to reveal her forgiveness and love does Densher abandon Kate. But he remains weak, dependent now upon Milly, who reveals herself to be the "power" he has sought, as he has been upon Kate.

suffering is most acute when he is isolated—after his moral rejection of Kate, but before his acceptance of Milly's love. When Sir Luke leaves the dying Milly to Densher alone, the physician's unspoken plea that he love Milly leads Densher to ask himself "into what abyss it had pushed him . . ." (XX, 309). Densher soars from the abyss, too late to save Milly, but not too late to be saved by her; he embraces spirit over flesh.

In a world whose institutional and aesthetic heritage has been drained of moral meaning, there can be no ultimately valid achievement for the James character without (in M. D. Zabel's phrase) "the final authority of selfhood."¹⁶ Thus the romantic epithets that Susan Stringham applies to Milly Theale lack real significance: the heiress of all the ages has an inheritance of corruption only; the princess reigns in a morally bankrupt empire. But Kate and, for the most part, Densher also miss the point by being too prosaic about Milly. To Kate, Milly is identified primarily with her fortune; to Densher she is the "little American girl" (XX, 174). Milly's descent to the abyss precedes the apotheosis of the dove—her transfigured self. Milly can acquire identity only by assaulting life, by risking everything. And not until her great and lonely moral achievement does Milly assume an identity independent of the social, economic, and aesthetic structures which had previously established, for others and for herself, her reality and her being.

¹⁶ *Craft and Character in Modern Fiction* (New York, 1957), pp. 280-281.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Editor and staff of *Criticism* are pleased to announce that

RICHARD FOSTER

was made the recipient of a Longview Literary Award of \$300 for his essay, "Criticism as Poetry," which appeared in the Spring 1959 issue of *Criticism*.

The Longview awards are given annually by the Longview Foundation for outstanding work in poetry, fiction, and the essay, published in literary periodicals which are unable to pay, or to pay adequately, for their contributions.

The Longview Awards Committee for 1959, which surveyed the entire field of "little" magazines, poetry and essay collections, and other literary periodicals, consisted of Saul Bellow, Louise Bogan, Charles Boni, Alfred Kazin, Thomas B. Hess, and Henri Peyre.

Book Reviews

The Picaresque Saint: Representative Figures in Contemporary Fiction by R. W.

B. Lewis. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1959. Pp. 317. \$6.00.

The older generation of twentieth-century novelists—Mr. Lewis catalogues Joyce, Mann, and Proust—were obsessed by death and took refuge from their fears in the City of Art. But now that is a ruined city, and the responsible novelists of another generation are driven (somewhat existentially, it seems) to the “rather desperate strategy” of finding “certain grounds for living *in life itself*.” Their heroes, sharing the misery of all humanity in an age of nihilism and legalized murder, are often rogues and worse, yet they aspire to be saints. It is Mr. Lewis’s main theme that this impure holy man is the central figure in the work of Moravia, Camus, Silone, Faulkner, and Graham Greene, as in that of their immediate “ancestor,” Malraux.

As in his earlier book, *The American Adam*, Mr. Lewis shows that he must work with an archetype, moulding it into a *Gestalt*. So far so good: at least the essays are connected, are not just unrelated heaps of statement. Unfortunately, an urgent necessity for unity can lead to oversimplifications that sometimes require a bending and squeezing of ideas to fit preconceptions. For example, Mr. Lewis suggests that “one writer of the first generation” of moderns created a *picaresque* saint—Thomas Mann in *Felix Krull*. But surely Mann presented others (what is Settembrini?); so did Lawrence (not alone with Mellors), and Joyce (with Bloom and Earwicker, to say nothing of Stephen Dedalus); and is not even Proust’s Charlus rather grotesquely and ironically in the category? Mr. Lewis says that there is one writer of “the third generation” who has added to the gallery: Saul Bellow in *Augie March*. But surely there are others in English, if not so talented as Bellow, who are, in some estimates in this tricky labelling, at least close enough to him in ability to be mentioned if he is: Bourjaily, Amis, Donleavy, Gold, two or three others—Kerouac if you will. Indeed, a recent book has put together Kerouac and his fellow-Beatniks under a title quite similar to Mr. Lewis’s: *The Holy Barbarians*.

The point is, Mr. Lewis has hit upon a good idea, but he tries to apply it too exclusively to his “middle generation.” In order to keep all this going, he exerts himself in critical legerdemain which is often admirable and flashing with insights. But he is frequently too solemn about limiting his focus and pretending that it is the only view possible of the turbulent literature of our time. If you accept Mr. Lewis’s claim that the six authors he particularly deals with have certain qualities in common, well and good; you can relax and enjoy yourself. For, within the terms of this acceptance, the book is a very fine one indeed.

Mr. Lewis calls his Epilogue “The Shared Reality: The Shadow of André Malraux,” and certainly Malraux’s shadow falls across the whole book. Malraux is slightly older than the other authors considered here (Mr. Lewis is right in saying this, though he scrambles chronology rather wildly on p. 276); and Malraux began writing significant work when fairly young. He was the first of these

writers to become established. The chapter on Camus, early in this book, shows that Malraux, who had emphasized the absurd, was "the intellectual hero of Camus's youth." In the Epilogue, Mr. Lewis points out that Camus is the only one of these representative writers directly influenced by Malraux, but further says: "If, in the generation-wide struggle to come alive, Moravia represents the erotic motif; if Camus represents human reason in its compassionate workings; if Silone represents the conversion of the political ambition into the charitable urge, and Faulkner the conversion of darkness into light and the old into the new; if Greene represents the interplay of the more than human with the less than human—then Malraux may be said to represent all of these things or versions of them. Thus, he may be said to typify the strongly marked evolution of the whole second generation."

Mr. Lewis has here summarized so many of his conclusions that we need no further synopsis of them; the space so made available can be used for some particular comments. Back to Malraux, then: one of the most valuable contributions to the estimate of this author is Mr. Lewis's discussion of *Les Noyers de l'Altenburg* (*The Walnut Trees of Altenburg*, not yet translated into English). Published in Switzerland in 1943, this novel is only the fragment of a larger work, most of it destroyed by the Gestapo before the almost legendary Malraux escaped from a German POW camp. Mr. Lewis, though he carefully relates this book to Malraux's other novels, gives it most emphasis because it is the least known of them over here and because it represents a high point in Malraux's fictional development. The setting is an Alsatian abbey where a group of intellectuals gathers for a colloquy; the story revolves around the experiences of Vincent Berger, a Malraux-like character divided between action and reflection who at last comes to the realization that the sense of life, as Mr. Lewis phrases it, "is to experience the happiness of fraternal pain."

Compassion of this kind, which so often occurs in the European novel, is rare in the American, where it tends to become melodramatic sentimentalism, as in Steinbeck. Mr. Lewis, in a fine comparison between Steinbeck and Silone shows how the former grew more mechanistically toward sociology and politics ("however emotionally intensified") while Silone's career registered "a defeat of political ambition that is at once a triumph over it, in the name simultaneously of humanity and of art." Steinbeck also became too involved in Emersonian "oversoul" ideas, leading to "a zestful and insufficiently examined confidence in human nature" (sentimentalism, surely); on the other hand, the one American writer to whom a chapter of this book is devoted, Faulkner, has in Mr. Lewis's opinion a rich endowment "of the tragic and ironic spirit," corrective of sentimentalism. Unfortunately, Mr. Lewis's chapter on Faulkner is only partial, unlike the others in the book which provide excellent total surveys of the careers of the writers discussed; here, only two of Faulkner's works are seriously examined, a novel (*A Fable*) and a short novel ("The Bear"). This chapter gives a rather uneven view of Faulkner, though it helps Mr. Lewis keep his eye on that author's picaresque-saint characters.

In *A Fable*, whose hero is more saintly than picaresque, Mr. Lewis sees "a deadness at the center," though "the amount of life that is thereby stricken remains enormous." But essentially it is one of those "impure" novels (Mr. Lewis draws upon R. P. Warren's term) in which no operation of the ironic or the skeptical prevents the good or the ideal from becoming too "misty." Conversely, mistiness of this kind is avoided in "The Bear" by Faulkner's "brilliant strategy

of representing it exactly as mist." Another flaw found in *A Fable* is that, in Yeats's concept, the central figure is rhetorical, an outcome of the author's quarrel with others rather than of his quarrel with himself. Yet Mr. Lewis finds more good to say about this novel than most other critics find; again it seems all the more regrettable that he didn't investigate more thoroughly Faulkner's major novels, the product of his earlier period. Like all American writers of stature, except Henry James, Faulkner as he has grown older has become more transcendently fuzzy.

This is not ordinarily true of European authors, even of Graham Greene, the only genuinely religious writer considered in this book; the religious sense, Mr. Lewis points out, is now often regarded as "hostile to human aspiration" as well as to the narrative art: "But out of both forms of hostility, Greene has drawn a peculiar anguish and a peculiar tension which are the determining features of his work." To Mr. Lewis, Greene's finest books are *The Power and the Glory*, whose wandering priest is an incomparable embodiment of the saintly rogue, and *The Heart of the Matter*. Mr. Lewis, who believes that Greene's dramatic talent is increasing as his narrative gift wanes, rates *The Quiet American* rather low. In John Atkins's book on Greene (a book not worth Mr. Lewis's single chapter on the subject), the objection to *The Quiet American* is (oddly enough for an Englishman) that the novel is unfriendly to America; Mr. Lewis's objections, largely technical, center around his claim to the effect that the book is flabby. But perhaps Mr. Lewis misses the parodic value of the quiet American himself, as a take-off on the picaresque-saint type.

Throughout, Mr. Lewis provides opinions that not everyone is going to agree with; he constantly joggles perspectives and challenges earlier evaluations. He seems happiest with Silone, though he is perhaps overcautious in his statement about *Bread and Wine*, put forth positively enough as Silone's best novel but, at another level, only as "possibly the best and probably the most representative novel of his generation." Always expert when he gets into the technical, Mr. Lewis shows how this book, although defying the Aristotelian strictures against the episodic, can nevertheless, along with other modern picaresque novels (and one play, Camus's *Caligula*), "fulfill many of the traditional requirements of form." But art alone is not Mr. Lewis's main consideration, and he makes it clear that it is not Silone's, either: if Silone's journey has taken him farther and farther along the road of art, it has also led him increasingly toward charity; and if this somewhat parallels the journey of Malraux (a point Mr. Lewis does not labor), at least Silone has kept at creative art more consistently than Malraux, whose last novel (the previously mentioned *Les Noyers*) appeared sixteen years ago. Silone's recent book, *The Secret of Luca*, represents a new phase, in which the author "is altogether and unqualifiedly a novelist," writing of a "new type of saint" which "is the best image of sacrificial human heroism that contemporary fiction can offer."

There is little enough of this in Moravia, and indeed Mr. Lewis never makes it clear what the devil Moravia is doing in this gallery—though the essay on him is perceptive and in places entertaining. Moravia sees the world through sex—in a different way from Lawrence, as Mr. Lewis explains, and certainly there is far more than sex in Lawrence's work: Moravia seeks the enigma of life in the erotic, though his aim is identical with Silone's in the political and Greene's in the religious: "to recover a more faithful image of man at a time when that image has been singularly deformed and betrayed." Mr. Lewis adds, "measured

against that purpose, Moravia's achievement is impressive, but partial," and we can thank Mr. Lewis for the shrewdness of that *partial*.

For Moravia, for all the attractive skill of his writing, does not go so far along Mr. Lewis's course as these other writers; Camus for example is a far more appropriate choice, for the picaresque saint glares out from both his life and his works. Even the monster Caligula, in Camus's play, "is a tormented *picaro*—a rogue beyond all roguery who yearns to be a saint," who "at every step in his unspeakable career . . . gives the impression of being only a step away from holiness." In many ways, Mr. Lewis's essay on Camus is the key chapter of his book for, as he says, "Camus is the most philosophical" of the writers discussed in it. Mr. Lewis sees Camus, with his recognition of the absurd and his cultivation of the indifferent, as the climax of a century's *malaise*. What Mr. Lewis does not note is that, more than any of these authors he talks about, Camus is in mid-career; and he belongs to the future more than any of them, not only because he may still have many books in him but more importantly because his subject matter is already more distinctly "modern," in the latest phase, than that of any of the rest.*

Two things remain to be said about Mr. Lewis's book, beyond the statement already made to the effect that one needn't give too rigid an acceptance to his idea of a central pattern. First, this remarkably fine book is all the more emphatically useful because it is virtually the only recent *international* book of critical studies—and how much better it is than books of this "comparative" kind we used to get, such as the late William Boyd's *Studies From Ten Literatures* and its many cousins and progeny. If Mr. Lewis's book seems limited in breadth, it is certainly not limited in depth. There are excellent individual studies of some of these authors—such as Germaine Brée's *Camus*—but there is no other single volume in English that so richly presents a group of representative authors from several literatures.

Beyond this, one more point, which has surely been implicit throughout this review: Mr. Lewis is a first-rate critic of techniques. His approach might seem primarily thematic, because of his title and his efforts to string ideas together, but he is always percipient of the modes of writing that make an author effective. Several examples of this are suggested above; the book itself is full of such considerations. Incidentally, Mr. Lewis is not afraid to make use of some of the so-called fallacies, such as biography and intention, when use of them is germane, as it often is; but all the way through his finest employment of means is of the technical. Granted, this cannot be intrinsically separated from the thematic, except that in this book one trusts Mr. Lewis oftener with the technical. Too many volumes of this kind are limited to the thematic; they approach various authors as if the men under discussion differed only in their ideas. Mr. Lewis, on the other hand, deals specifically with the expressional: deals with it specifically, concretely, believably. This also helps to give this book a value beyond others of its kind.

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* Though the death of Camus since this review was written obviously invalidates part of this sentence, it is allowed to stand since Mr. Moore's *critical* point remains pertinent despite the tragic alteration of fact. [E.R.M.]

Henry Purcell, 1659-1695: Essays on His Music, ed. Imogen Holst. London: Oxford University Press, 1959. Pp. 136. \$4.25.

Composite volumes by a varied group of authors have become a familiar phenomenon in the modern literature about music. Often they are, as in the case under review, centennial memorial offerings. The essays in such volumes are, in the nature of the publication, usually short. They have the character of the "smorgasbord," and rarely fail to offer in every item something of interest to some consumer and, at least, a few titbits of great relish to any and every sympathetic reader.

The Purcell tercentenary volume is no exception. In fact, some of its titbits are, for all their brevity, of a truly substantial character. The editor is Miss Imogen Holst, daughter of the reputable and prolific English composer, Gustav Holst (1874-1934). Miss Holst points out that most of the contributions "are the result of trying to solve some of the practical problems of editing Purcell's works for performance." Most of them were written by sound practical musicians (composers, organists, singers).

The slim volume contains nine essays and three significant appendices. The names of the authors, with a brief parenthetical remark to indicate the specific nature of the essay, are as follows: Peter Pears (homage), Benjamin Britten (the continuo in songs), Eric Walter White (new light on *Dido and Aeneas*), Imogen Holst (librettist Nahum Tate), Michael Tippett (continuity in English drama and music), Jeremy Nobel (Purcell and the Chapel Royal), Ralph Downes (an organist on the organ works), Robert Donington (performance today, with a section on dances by the editor), Franklin B. Zimmerman (Purcell's handwriting), Nigel Fortune and Franklin B. Zimmerman (Purcell's autographs), Robert Donington (17th and 18th century evidence on performance), the editor (the Nanki [Japan] collection of Purcell's works).

Benjamin Britten, one of England's notable composers, explains his own practice of making subjective, expressive song accompaniments on Purcell's continuo basses, using judiciously all the devices of modern piano texture, in preference to the plain four-part chordal harmony of the text-books, which has often, in modern, practical editions, burdened Purcell's suggestive music with a weight of dull and uninspired monotony.

For this reviewer the most satisfying item in the volume is Mr. Eric White's contribution: "New Light on *Dido and Aeneas*." It is one of the very substantial titbits mentioned earlier. *Dido and Aeneas* was the only true opera or music drama among Purcell's works. All of his many other works for the theater, which were probably his chief source of income, were series of vocal and instrumental pieces, sometimes with more, sometimes with less dramatic coherence, which were interpolated in spoken plays (about forty in number) in more or less appropriate places.

The history of this work, written originally for performance by "Young Gentlewomen" at "Mr. Josias Priest's Boarding School at Chelsey," has never been entirely cleared up. Its first performance by the young ladies seems to have been in 1689 or 1690. No autograph or other written score of this form is known. Five years after Purcell's death it was known to have been revived in a revised version for adult singers, male and female. According to Mr. White's

minute and searching studies in the theater history of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries it was performed in the form of additions ("musics" or entertainments) inserted directly into the text of successive acts of Charles Gildon's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, as performed by Betterton's company at Lincoln's Inn Fields early in 1700. It was performed on its own as a "masque" at Lincoln's Inn Fields, following the score of *Dido* January 29, 1704 and following *The Man of Mode* on April 8 of that year.

The score of *Dido and Aeneas* was first printed by the Musical Antiquarian Society in 1840, edited by G. A. Macfarren, and again in 1889 as Volume 3 of the Purcell Society's edition by W. H. Cummings. These printed editions were based chiefly on two manuscript scores; one now in the library of Saint Michael's College at Tenbury, and one owned by W. H. Cummings. Cummings' valuable library was sold in 1917 after his death. A Japanese nobleman, the Marquis Tokugawa, purchased about four hundred items including the score of *Dido and Aeneas* as well as several other works by Purcell, printed and manuscript. These were taken to Tokyo and deposited in The Nanki Music Library there. The present owner of this score is Mr. Kiyuhei Oki in Tokyo.

For some years after Cummings' death the purchase of the Marquis Tokugawa remained unknown to many British music lovers and historians, and a legend of the lost manuscript of *Dido* began to spread. However, Mr. White learned that it had gone to Japan, but could not locate it. Inquiries were set on foot by Miss Holst, but were not completed when Mr. White's essay went to press. Before the book came off the press the mystery was cleared up, and Miss Holst explains it all in the four pages of Appendix C. The present owner consented to the study of a microfilm of the score. The results were startling. Cummings does not enjoy a completely unblemished reputation as a reliable historian. In his preface to the Purcell Society's edition he states his belief that his score was probably written in Purcell's time. The sales catalog assigns it to the eighteenth century. Miss Holst states that the first nine pages date from the second half of the nineteenth century and that the remainder was written "approximately 1800 to 1810."

A comparison of the microfilm of Cummings and the Tenbury manuscript shows that the two contain practically the same material. Both are incomplete, and the missing parts are about the same in both scores. The Cummings score seems on the whole to be more accurate. The Tenbury score was believed to date from the eighteenth century, but Mr. White discloses the fact that its paper bears the watermark of "J. Whatman" and hence cannot be earlier than the latter part of the eighteenth century. It is supposed that both these scores were copied from the same earlier source, which might, quite possibly, have been a score provided for one of the theater performances in the early eighteenth century. Up to the present this earlier source has not been brought to light.

Miss Holst's chief contribution to the main body of the volume, "Purcell's librettist, Nahum Tate," has a literary as well as a musical interest. It is known that the *Dido* libretto, which was printed for the performance in Mr. Priest's school, was not his first attempt to dramatize this incident in the fourth book of the *Aeneid*. His earlier work was a drama. It altered the names of the characters and the scene of action, and was published under the title of *Brutus of Alba* in 1678. Miss Holst makes a valiant attempt to defend him in this instance against

accusations of lack of musical understanding, of mediocrity or even of banality, often heaped upon him. Purcell's many incidental theater works of necessity show a lack of unity. "The astonishing unity of *Dido and Aeneas*," says Miss Holst, "is often mentioned, but Tate's share in it has seldom been acknowledged. He was Purcell's only real librettist in our sense of the word." She gives two musical examples of how Purcell used Tate's words for dramatic characterization.

Mr. Jeremy Noble's essay, "Purcell and the Chapel Royal," is an interesting and highly informative picture of the organization of the Chapel Royal in Purcell's time. It provides us with a list of fifty-two Gentlemen of the Chapel who were active from 1682-1695, that is, the time from Purcell's admission as a Gentleman (organist) until his death. Members of Purcell's family had been in the Chapel, and our Purcell, as a child, had been one of the twelve boy choristers. The usual number of singers (including organists) in Purcell's time was twelve boys and thirty-two men.

Mr. Robert Donington's "Performing Purcell's Music Today" deals with such problems as accidentals, embellishments, continuo accompaniments, tempo and rubato, rhythms: dots and inequality, phrasing and articulation, instrumental style and technique. Appendix A by Fortune and Zimmerman, "Purcell's Autographs," gives a surprisingly large list of music in Purcell's handwriting. The compilers do not agree with earlier bibliographers and have included a number of manuscripts formerly not regarded as autographs. The main body of the list numbers about 232 titles. Thirty-six are works by other composers (Hunfrey, Blow, Locke, Tallis, Byrd and others) copied in Purcell's hand. Ten supposititious autographs are added, and finally ten reliable non-autograph manuscript sources of major works.

It must be evident from this account that the tercentenary volume affords interesting reading and offers many new facts or new points of view.

OTTO KINKELDEY

South Orange, New Jersey

The Interior Distance by Georges Poulet. Translated by Elliot Coleman. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1959. Pp. x + 302. \$6.00.

It took courage for an American press to undertake the publication (and it is a handsome one) of this profound but abstruse volume of criticism, forbiddingly subtle and persistently philosophical. At least as much determination, industry and insight were required from the translator: his version is expert, faithful to the literality of the original and to its often involved meaning. Our sole regret is that the verse quotations were not given in the original French in the footnotes, for their impact fails to be forcible when they lose their rhythmic and evocative qualities.

This series of essays on space (loosely and diversely understood) in ten different French writers (four of them poets) is in the same vein as the critic's previous *Studies in Human Time*, translated by the same Johns Hopkins professor. Georges Poulet, a Belgian-born critic now teaching at Zurich, is one of the most

distinguished representatives of that philosophical school of literary critics which gained ascendancy in France between 1935 and 1950. Gaston Bachelard and Maurice Blanchot are his two greatest predecessors; Roland Barthes and Jean-Pierre Richard stand among his most gifted followers. Lately a mood of revolt against the philosophers' quasi-monopoly on criticism appears to have emerged in France. "Pourquoi des Philosophes?" was the title of one of the books by a younger man; Ionesco and iconoclastic dramatists, the novelists of "la nouvelle vague," fascinated by the meticulous description of the concrete and intent upon beheading the hydras of philosophy and of psychology, are attempting to demystify theoretical disquisitions on literature.

Their revolt is no doubt a healthy one. In France as in America, many a reader of those ingenious works, in which the interpreter proves to be far more intelligent than the creative writer ever was or meant to be, whispered the remark once made by La Bruyère: "The pleasure of criticism . . . takes away that of being intensely moved by very beautiful things." The question is of immense import and must indeed be raised. Meanwhile, the serious reader must bow before the great merits of this work: it is honest, piercing, often highly illuminating; it is all instinct with the austere pride of understanding mysterious writers and of exposing their mental structures. It is imperious, but tactfully and gently so. It imposes a system upon a variety of creative temperaments, and that scholastic system might become a constricting straitjacket; but it does not. If M. Poulet reads Cartesian and Mallarmean obsessions in every French writer, just as M. Blanchot sees in every practitioner of letters a Kafkaesque or Hoelderlinian personage, asserting "the right to death," he also takes into account the diversity of temperaments. His Marivaux is too philosophical: a metaphysician reaching, beyond the Cartesian *cogito*, to an astonished emergence out of non-existence, the portrayer of characters basking delightfully in the ephemeral and finding "le style du coeur" in absolute instantaneity. Vauvenargues is depicted as more profound than he really was, apprehending the being as activity, seeing in love only a craving for the exteriorization of oneself in action. Laclos, again, is explained as obsessed by a "project," minutely contrived scheming. His novel shows characters animated by "the will to substitute for an undetermined future that is the work of chance, another future, predetermined, which is the work of the will." Musset's need to love in order to live, his hurried greed for fulfillment in an immediate present obliterating time is compared, not very illuminatingly, to Kierkegaard and to Proust.

The implicit conviction of these French philosophical critics (and not a few American students are close to the French in that respect) is that literature in itself (that of Musset, of Marivaux, of Herrick, of Keats, of the early Yeats) is but a paltry thing unless it be exalted to a philosophical plane and translated into either a dialectics (with subtle structural secrets pointing to a conciliation of tragic opposites) or into an ethical message on sin, or on the one thing which, says T. S. Eliot, "does not change . . . the perpetual struggle of Good and Evil." It probably reveals how deep the survival of Victorianism is among us and how didactic and Jansenist the French, once charged with incurable levity, are in truth (M. Poulet is Belgian, taught for many years in Scotland, then in the city where Poe died and where Mencken robustly pontified. But his acclaim has come from France). Goethe admonished Eckermann more reasonably when, on

May 6, 1827, he warned him against always seeking ideas in a work of art: "Do not believe all the time that everything must be worthless if it is not an abstract thought or idea . . . a poetic creation is the better for being . . . rationally incomprehensible."

The present reviewer, and many a reader of this rich and thoughtful work, are oftentimes tempted to lay aside a critical work which has to resort to obscure and ugly style and which compels writers, whose fancy might have roamed free, to enter a cage with bars built by the Scholastics, Descartes, Hegel and Mallarmé. They may even be provoked into exclaiming that the best literature is that which is not reducible to philosophy, and that time and space have not obsessed pre-Proustian or pre-Joycean writers quite so tragically as we are nowadays led to imagine. The terms "space" and "distance" are not, in fact, very satisfactorily defined in M. Poulet's two-page introduction. Every thought, he explains, is of something exterior to it, to be sure; but it is also an interior depth which perceptions and images from outside come to fill. "My thought is a space in which my thoughts take place, in which they take their place. . . . All that I think is in myself who think it."

Objections to M. Poulet's method could be many: the context of the time, which makes Marivaux's or Chamfort's concern with interior distance vastly different from Guérin's romantic pantheism or from Balzac's possessive will to be and to turn desire into appropriating domination of things and men. The historical background cannot be so lightly dismissed. Nor can the biographical data: what sort of man was Marivaux, Balzac, Musset, and through what circumstances? The critic adduces extremely ingenious phrases culled from each of the ten authors studied; he juxtaposes them, but without analyzing them, and rather arbitrarily he derives far reaching and very subtle conclusions, sometimes from a single word or image. All commentary of form properly speaking is left out; the sensuous and suggestive values of poetry hardly seem to matter.

Still, in the best studies in the volume, those on Balzac, Hugo and Mallarmé, even the most cantankerous reader's resistance must avow itself vanquished. The Mallarmean move to deny the existence of all that is, in order to assert the future existence of that which does not exist, namely a book, is splendidly described; incidental commentaries on the mirror, the glass of distance, the myth of absence, the worship of death in Mallarmé are equally perspicacious. Hugo is dissected with no regard for the vast differences between his early poems and his late apocalyptic ones; sentences uttered by fictional characters like Quasimodo or Jean Valjean are interpreted as revealing Hugo's own thought. But very curious passages from the prose masterpieces of Hugo (as we believe them to be), his *Choses vues*, *le Rhin* and especially *Alpes et Pyrénées* (published only in 1890), have led M. Poulet to an illuminating dissection of Hugo's imaginative processes. The rhetoric of the poet appears, not just as a device to cover up vacuity of thought, but as the necessary equivalent, in words heaped upon words, of the visionary amassment of swarming forms which was Hugo's "faculté maîtresse." No poet has thus naturally succeeded in replacing introspection, for which he was not especially suited, by a massive espousal of enormous and proliferating wholes, a solidarity between the self and the world.

M. Poulet's volume will arouse irritation, opposition, but it will also compel respect and in the end win our admiration for all that, in it, independently from

its central point of view, is profound and lucid. Much too little is known in America, outside specialists of French, of the very rich critical movement which has taken place in France since Rivière, Du Bos, Fernandez and Thibaudet. This volume is one of many which should be translated into English.

HENRI PEYRE

Yale University

Shelley's Later Poetry: A Study of His Prophetic Imagination by Milton Wilson.
New York: Columbia University Press, 1959. Pp. vi + 332. \$6.00.

This book constitutes a significant development in contemporary Shelley criticism; it is the first predominantly critical study of Shelley's poetry in many years that is neither a defense or an attack. Mr. Wilson is calm, objective, balanced, unexcited. His approach is, in his own words, "the kind of sympathetic yet exacting consideration with which Shelley deserves to be recalled by the modern reader." Thus *Shelley's Later Poetry* is an important achievement, though it doubtless owes much to the Time Spirit and to recent criticism: it could hardly have been written even five years ago.

Wilson's method of analyzing Shelley's poetry permits him to find faults in it without finding the faults disastrous. He is immune to the insidious charms of organicism, so that he is able to point out partial defects in a poem without thereby condemning the whole in which they occur. No poem, in his view, actually attains the totality of integration, the complete fusion of form and content defined and assumed by the theory and the method of organic unity, nor is any poem entirely self-contained and autonomous. Shelley's poetry looks before and after; it is in a state of becoming rather than being; its execution, even at best, does not merge with its conception. But these are conditions common in a greater or less degree to all poetry. Shelley, as a "prophetic" poet, indeed presents a special problem, but it is special in degree rather than in kind.

Wilson submits a number of Shelley's briefer lyrics to detailed examination, with very good results. His explication of "When the Lamp is Shattered" is the most illuminating that I have seen, and he achieves a surprising success with apparently slight effusions like "The Keen Stars Were Twinkling." His method is logical and syntactical without being dialectical, in that he treats a poem as an argument developing from point to point without feeling obliged to deal with it as a thematic statement self-subjected to the test of paradox, thus dissolved into contradiction, and resolved by imaginative paralogic, after the fashion of most modern explicators. His analysis of grammar is unusually close and detailed, but he manages to avoid giving the impression that grammatical relationships are the critic's sole concern.

To Wilson the central problem of Shelley's later poems is the unresolved stress between Shelley's radicalism and his Platonism that is almost everywhere to be found in them. "The radical world is, roughly speaking, the world of the *philosophes*. . . . It is empirical in its epistemology and centers upon the egoism-

altruism opposition in its ethics. Its historical goal is the Earthly Paradise, it means the regeneration of the will. The Platonic world is . . . Plato's world of discontinuity and rivalry between the One and the Many and between the Form and the Image (without too much Christian and Renaissance blurring of the opposition). It is otherworldly in its epistemology and negative in its view of evil. Its (nonhistorical) goal is the City of God or 'the burning fountain,' it means Death and the ultimate Apocalypse" (p. 51). Shelley is not able to bring these two worlds together, and thus *Prometheus Unbound*, which is the principal object of Wilson's attention throughout *Shelley's Later Poetry*, establishes only an unstable relationship between them. There is confusion between Prometheus as Man and as Platonic Ideal; the Earthly Paradise is achieved, yet the hero retires to a remoter paradise of contemplation; and Man, almost perfectly enfranchised, is yet incapable of reaching

The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

Even with the millennium achieved, the play ends on a note of doubt with Demogorgon's suggestion that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance, that the old serpent may rise from his pit once more. The same confusion is present, according to Wilson, in the Keats of *Adonais*, who becomes "a portion of the Eternal" in two quite different senses.

The author effectually dispels a widespread but irrelevant criticism of *Prometheus Unbound*'s dramatic quality by aligning it with *Prometheus Bound*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Samson Agonistes* as a "drama of revelation." This genre is primarily concerned with the protagonist, whose character is widened and deepened rather than developed. That the crisis of Shelley's Prometheus occurs in the play's opening scene is therefore not a damaging circumstance, but simply a necessary aspect of a legitimate genre. The body of the drama is the unraveling of the consequences of Prometheus' victory. It must be confessed that Wilson, no doubt excusably, is a little uncertain what to do with Demogorgon, upon whom a more monistic approach to Shelley might cast a brighter and more favorable light. The *Epipsychidion* and *Adonais*, he considers, approach without attaining a resolution of the difficulties of Shelley's radicalism and his conflicting Platonism, while his final *Triumph of Life*, which is of course a fragment, retrogresses.

Shelley's Later Poetry furnishes a trenchant though incomplete account of some key-images of Shelley's, in particular the mirror, the wheel, and the veil. The mirror represents the problem of the self, which belongs to the selfishness-altruism ethics that Shelley derived from eighteenth-century empiricism. Here one might remark that Wilson somewhat underrates Shelley's psychological content in emphasizing the ethical, and makes him a little less a Romantic than he is. It would be possible to ignore Shelley's wheel-imagery entirely if one were not alerted, as is Wilson, by Eliot's use of the wheel to resolve the Time-Eternity opposition in *Four Quartets*. Of the veil the author comments acutely but incompletely that it "points up a central paradox in the work of any poet who works within a merely Platonic frame of reference," since there is always the vexed question whether the veil embodies, conceals, or distorts the truth within it.

The phrase "merely Platonic" points to a central contention of *Shelley's Later Poetry*—that what Shelley basically lacks is the Christian concept of Grace. "He

does not point any complementary force outside the individual which meets the imaginative impulse from within and transforms self-love into charity." Without this sense of Grace there is "merely Platonic" duality—unresolved opposition between conception and execution, idea and image, eternity and time, so that one continually notes in Shelley a fatality that dogs all aspiration, a Shadow, to follow Wilson in citing *The Hollow Men*, that falls between the potency and the existence. The demonstration is interesting, perhaps a little too neat and pat, as is generally the case when religious dogma is applied to literary criticism. Its certainties deprive the literary problem of the necessary interest of suspense. Wilson's emphasis upon Shelley's dualism provides him with a sharp weapon for analysis, and his lack of anxiety to press toward a Shelleyan center of vitality (as it were) permits him to see Shelley's qualities separately with admirable clarity and fullness. His book should stand in the first rank of recent studies of Shelley's poetry. Yet one wishes for a more unified approach to Shelley, which would still preserve Wilson's richness, his balance, his scrupulous attention to parts: a study that would penetrate to the one idea behind both the radicalism and the Platonism of Shelley. There is much advantage in taking them separately, as *Shelley's Later Poetry* convincingly shows; but they might finally be drawn together.

RICHARD HARTER FOGLE

Tulane University.

The Subtler Language: Critical Readings of Neoclassic and Romantic Poems by Earl R. Wasserman. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1959. Pp. 361. \$6.00.

The neoclassic poems of which Mr. Wasserman gives readings are Dryden's *Epistle to Charleton*, Denham's *Cooper's Hill* and Pope's *Windsor Forest*; and the romantic poems are three by Shelley: *Mont Blanc*, *The Sensitive Plant* and *Adonais*. In his introductory and middle chapters Mr. Wasserman sets forth something of his conception of the function of poetry, points out fundamental differences in poetry before and after the late eighteenth century, and speculates on the causes.

Poetry is the subtler language (the phrase is from Shelley's *Revolt of Islam*), subtler than discursive language, because its extraordinary syntactical possibilities enable it to create its own self-sufficient organization of reality, "its own self-containing poetic cosmos." Mr. Wasserman has chosen for explication poems which he believes "are notable for the high degree to which they became autonomous realities through the syntactical capacities of language." He distinguishes between two fundamental forms of poetry which he arbitrarily labels lyric and dramatic. Until the end of the eighteenth century, poetry was essentially lyric; from then until the present it has been essentially dramatic. Mr. Wasserman's habit of giving to familiar terms his own special definition is disconcerting and confusing; and in this case it is detrimental to what is otherwise an important and useful distinction for the comparative examination of neoclassic and romantic poetry. For lyric is the term most apt to come to mind in connection with

romantic poetry, and least apt in connection with neoclassic poetry; and dramatic is too Protean a term to have much definitive value at all. The distinction Mr. Wasserman is trying to draw demands fresh terms as free as possible of contradictory and confused associations.

The neoclassic poet, he says, could take for granted a commonly accepted world order which he could draw upon for the world of his poetry. He could expect his audience to recognize his use of such "cosmic syntaxes" as the doctrine of analogous planes of creation, the Great Chain of Being, the dialectic of *concordia discors*, and pagan and Christian systems of myth. The poet's task was to "imitate nature" by giving poetic reality to nature's principles as embodied in these organizing patterns. But by the end of the eighteenth century men no longer shared in any significant degree a sense of cosmic design, and the poet was forced to formulate his own cosmic syntax, to create with it his own poetic world, and then to go on and explore it imaginatively for the truths it could unfold.

The three neoclassic poems that Mr. Wasserman has chosen to examine have in common, as he explicates them, the fact that they are fundamentally political poems, celebrating the rule of the Stuarts. Dryden's *Epistle to Charleton*, ostensibly congratulating him upon his presumed discovery that Stonehenge was the palace in which the ancient Danes crowned their elected king, was written shortly after the restoration of Charles II and becomes, as Mr. Wasserman plausibly demonstrates, a means of asserting that all events, including scientific discoveries, "providentially acclaim, and are in accord with the restoration," at the same time expressing Dryden's hope for a limited monarchy. Denham's *Cooper's Hill*, written in 1642, is interpreted as "consistently and coherently political at its core." It is first of all an eulogy of Charles I, but beyond that it is an affirmation of the doctrine of *concordia discors*, harmony through strife, as the law of nature and therefore the law for men. The political harmony arising from the conflict of king and people reflects and imitates the cosmic harmony produced by the clash of opposing elements. The primary function of the descriptive elements in the poem is to create a realizable and meaningful structure for the political concept being formulated.

Mr. Wasserman's explication of *Windsor Forest* is extremely elaborate and ingenious. When Pope published the poem he added a section celebrating the Tory Peace of Utrecht (1712) but Mr. Wasserman sees this as simply the logical conclusion to a poem which from first to last is a celebration of the restoration of Tory rule under Queen Anne. *Windsor Forest* is throughout the controlling symbol of the cosmic principle reflected in the Tory state. The three hunting episodes which constitute the first section of the poem are all variations on the unifying theme of *concordia discors*, making a dialectic in which the first and last depict scenes destructive of order and the central scene the ideal of harmonious conflict. The first, the ruthless hunting of William the Conqueror, Mr. Wasserman interprets as a thinly veiled allusion to (through Tory eyes) the tyranny of Whiggism under William of Orange; and the last, the ravishment of the huntress Lodona, as an allusion to the way in which the people of England were misled into a ruinous foreign war by the Whigs. The central episode, the hunt as conducted now in the age of Anne, presents the proper balance.

At this point the reader grows impatient. The learned and labored elucidation of these episodes has taken 40 pages and there are 25 more to go on *Windsor*

Forest. Aside from the fact that interpretations like those of the myth of Lodona seem too forced, and the dialectical progression too pat, the question of value suddenly becomes important. By choosing to devote half his book to three minor Tory poems, Mr. Wasserman, whether he so intended or not, has placed neoclassic poetry in its narrowest, pettiest and least defensible frame of reference. One could almost suspect him of sabotaging neoclassic poetry for the benefit of romantic poetry or at least of Shelley. And certainly these poems become a poor argument for his central thesis. Presumably the subtler language of poetry expresses a reality beyond the reach of the discursive; self-contained and perennially meaningful to men. Yet these poems are frankly period pieces, enshrining not universal truths but false scientific hypotheses and distortions of historical facts to fit immediate political ends, and the subtler language becomes an elaborate play of wit and fancy for the glorification of a particular social and political order. They seem ironically anticlimactic after the promise of the introduction; and it is hard to understand why Mr. Wasserman did not put his skills of elucidation to the service of more significant poems by Dryden and Pope.

The same objection cannot be raised against the poems of Shelley, which illustrate perfectly the kind of poetic world the Romantics tried to create imaginatively when the old public "cosmic syntax" was no longer acceptable. Perhaps the best explication in the book is of *Mont Blanc*. Here Mr. Wasserman shows effectively how Shelley, beginning with the key image of the sceptical or "Intellectual" philosophy—"The everlasting universe of things / Flows through the mind"—proceeds to examine separately in terms of the imagery of *Mont Blanc* the relative claims of mind and matter, finally coming through contemplation of the cold silent summit of the mountain to a recognition of transcendent power beyond both mind and matter, the limits of reality as defined by the Intellectual philosophy. Mr. Wasserman's reading demonstrates persuasively that those portions of the poems which most critics have found to represent inconsistent or contradictory philosophical positions are in reality part of a coherently developed pattern of exploration and discovery.

He does not seem to me to have been as successful in his readings of *The Sensitive Plant* and *Adonais*. Though he steers clear of imposing a consistent external philosophy, he is tempted to read into the poems too strict an internal logic. He tends to equate internal reality and intellectual coherence. The cosmos of the neoclassic poet was, it is true, highly rational. But by the very nature of the breakdown Mr. Wasserman has described, the cosmos of the romantic poet became almost inevitably tentative and changing, a projection of desire rather than a reflection of accepted reality. The romantic poet is subject to suddenly shifting moods of extreme affirmation and extreme despondency, depending upon a complex of circumstances affecting his sense of well-being. And the movement of the poetry is more likely to be controlled by the moods than by a carefully premeditated plan. *Mont Blanc*, because of its compact symbolism and its relatively straightforward progression, lends itself to logical explication. But *The Sensitive Plant* and *Adonais* both reflect the conflicting moods engendered by Shelley's contemplation of mutability and mortal frustration. There is a very real clash between the third section of *The Sensitive Plant* describing the decay of the garden and the conclusion which asserts that it is a modest and pleasant creed to own that death is a mockery and that the garden has never passed away. But Mr. Wasserman is convinced that the clash is only apparent and that the

conclusion is implicit in the structure of the poem from the beginning, and by an exhaustive and relentless analysis of the imagery he forces the poem to fit into a Procrustean bed of Platonic consistency.

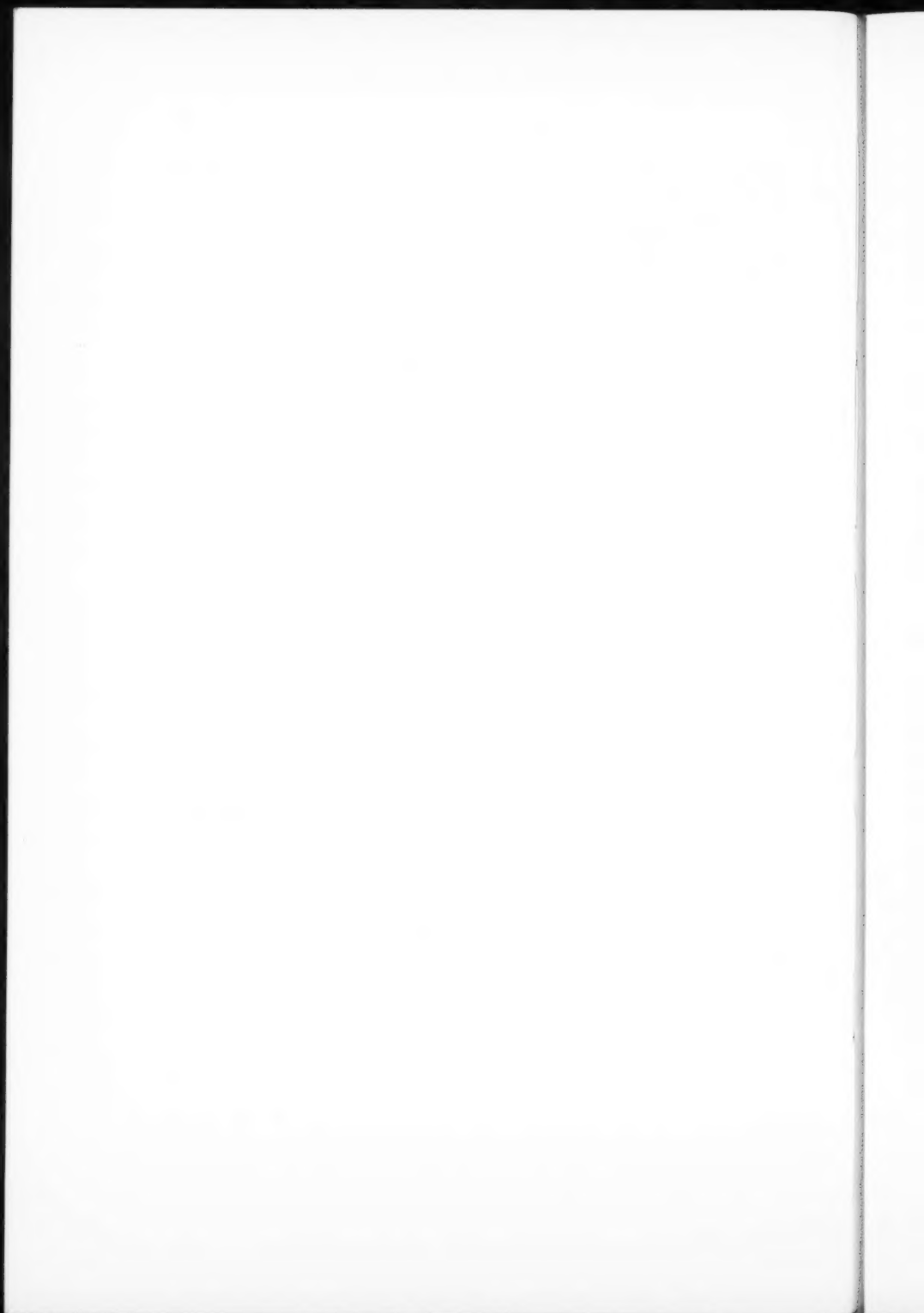
In a similar fashion he ignores the turbulent passion of *Adonais* and reduces the poem to a coldly classical and logical argument. He analyzes its development through three highly wrought movements: the first seventeen stanzas in which death appears as the only reality and all things move to annihilation; the next twenty stanzas in which physical Nature is presented as endlessly reviving and only mind dies; and the concluding section in which mind is seen to be eternal and all else mutable. He argues that "the poem gains its energy from a system of ironies whose function is to compel a progressive revelation" and traces Shelley's use of the methods of satiric and dramatic irony to weave the movements together. But when he has finished, the vital core of the poem is missing: what Burke would call the symbolic action has been stilled. From reading the explication, one would never know how violent is the castigation of the critic, how bitter the revulsion against mortal life which leads to the sudden Platonic affirmation. One would not be aware of the shift from the perspective of what Mr. Wilson in his recent book on *Shelley's Later Poetry* calls the Promethean World in which the contrast is between the murderer and the victim, to that of the Platonic world in which the contrast is between all men, mourners as well as murderer, "decaying in their living death," and the Eternal.

Nor would one be aware of the intensely emotional quality of Shelley's Platonic vision which enables him to leap quite unselfconsciously from the contemplation of *Adonais'* absorption in the impersonal One to the contemplation of a personal poetic immortality. And most of all one would not be aware of the intensity of the death wish at the last. "Taken in conjunction with the other occurrence of similar imagery, it becomes clear," writes Mr. Wasserman, "that the conclusion of the elegy is not a plea for suicide, but a prayer that the limited spiritual existence expand into a pure and infinite spiritual life. . . . The emphasis is not upon the destruction of the mortal self, but upon the enlargement of the earthly soul until 'Heaven's light' which burns bright in proportion as the earthly soul mirrors it will remove the mortal atmosphere." Well, perhaps the conclusion is no plea for suicide, but it is not what Mr. Wasserman says it is either. The distortion in his explication is evident when we set it beside the hypnotic incantation of the lines beginning "Die, / If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek."

Mr. Wasserman's treatment of *Adonais* illustrates what keeps his readings of the poems in general from being wholly satisfying. Though the conception of poetry which guides him is admirable, he cannot in the end avoid the temptation of making explication the subtler language.

EDWARD E. BOSTETTER

University of Washington



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